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JAN/FEB 2006 Windows / Mac

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welcome

Welcome...

If this year has taught us anything, it's that the design world has never been a more competitive place in which to live and work. To survive in such a cut throat industry, it's now more vital than ever for today's digital creatives to become much more than simply masters of their primary artistic persuasion. Indeed, the key to success is evolving your talents to become a true multimedia professional. So we've packed the Jan/Feb issue of *Digital Creative Arts* with all the features you'll need to transform yourself into a truely multifaceted master.

Whether you are a die hard Photoshopper, an Illustrator devotee or even a 3D whiz kid, you'll find all sorts of innovative ways in this magazine to help you expand your range of skills and find new tools with which you will be able to paint a truer picture of success through your work.

Artistic know-how is the foundation of every creative's work flow, and the start of a new year is the perfect time to revisit the basics. Turn to page 48 to explore the capabilities of Corel Painter IX and discover how you can integrate natural media effects into your Photoshop routine - twenty first century style. In this respect, all our expert workshops have a distinctly multimedia flavour, and through Photoshop, Illustrator, Maya, Compressor and more we'll show you how to create stunning artwork that takes advantage of the qualities that have made all of 2005 software releases the greatest and most advanced yet.

Up front in the magazine, we've got a veritable feast of appetisers, including our guide to helping you make your mark in your chosen creative field.

There's also professional advice on integrating sound into your digital projects as well as a peep into what the future of space age hardware has in store. Throw into the mix an interview with leading illustrator Tim Marrs and a trip behind the scenes of this season's special effects-fest *King Kong*, and we're confident that you'll find this edition of *Digital Creative Arts* the most inspirational yet.

Enjoy the issue!

Natalie

Natalie Hitchins
Editor

FEATURED EXPERTS

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Digital Artist and Illustrator

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Multimedia Artist

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3D Expert and Author

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Author and Imageer

artists this issue...

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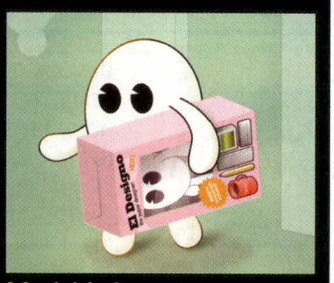
www.raysmith.bz

Peskimo
www.peskimo.com

Dirtyvelvet
www.dirtyvelvet.co.uk



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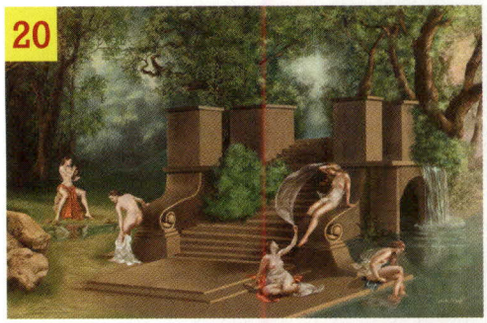
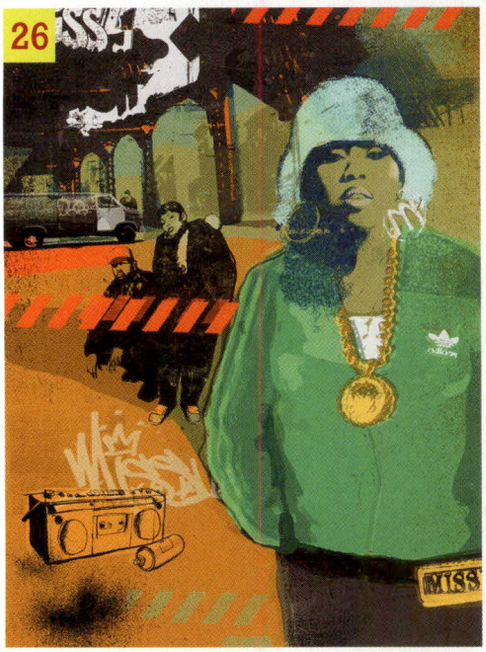




DCA Labs

89 The latest kit reviewed

Turn to page 89 to see the latest digital kit put through its paces and under the microscope. This issue we get up close and personal with Wacom's latest consumer tablet, Kodak's new P880 prosumer camera and a raft of flatbed scanners. On the software side of things there's also Carrara Basics 2, Nero 7 Premium and Mastering Maya from 3d Buzz

regulars

07 Newswire The latest stories, hot off the press. Turn to page seven to discover the latest events, gossip and products making the headlines in the digital world and beyond

13 Feedback. From subscriptions to Photoshop specials, Feedback is the place to share your views on what's hot and what's not in *DCA* and the wider world of computer arts

16 Behind the scenes: King Kong. Prepare to take a super-sized walk on the wild side as Marc Chacksfield unlocks the secrets behind the special effects that brought Peter Jackson's latest fantasy epic to life

20 Portfolio. The place in the magazine where we showcase your talent, this issue sees a unique trio of artists get the full Portfolio treatment. Be inspired on page twenty

26 The Interview: Tim Marrs. We talk exclusively to Tim Marrs about his recent commission for Nike's Brand Jordan. In an open and honest interview, Tim gets to the nitty gritty of making it in the illustration industry

68 Resources. Fast forward to page 99 for full details of this issue's recommended resources. Whether you're after a killer font, free stock footage or high quality photography, you'll find a host of sites dedicated to those highly essential design ingredients

tutorials

46 Painter vs Photoshop. Harness the awesome power of Photoshop and Painter combined in this handy guide to mixing digital media

52 Freestyle type art. In the second instalment of our exclusive creative type series, Rhys Davies shows how to produce illustrations using a Webdings font and Illustrator

56 The mask of Maya: part one. Master of Maya, Simon Danahan begins this three part adventure by building the Japanese Noh mask which he will later add texture and light to, and animate

62 Get started with DrawPlus 5. Discover how to get the best from this issue's free full software package, Serif DrawPlus 5

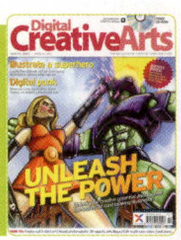
64 Eastern promise. Create a vector vision with a Japanese twist using Faye Donohue's guide to creating a captivating vectorised photo montage with Photoshop and Illustrator

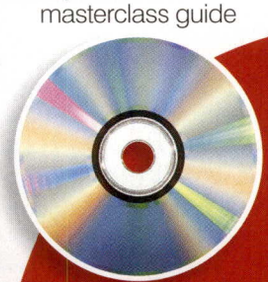
70 Instant expert: Compressor. Master the complexities of video conversion with the latest version of Apple's native Compressor 2 software

76 Rise of the machine. Become a virtual mechanic and get cyborg chic using expert Tim Shelbourne's Photoshop masterclass guide

15: Subscribe

Turn to page 15 for full details on how to receive *Digital Creative Arts* direct to your doorstep with savings of up 55 per cent >>>





TURN TO PAGES 112-113 FOR FULL LISTINGS

ON THE CD

- Full Serif software worth £60
- Full free Xara Webstyle software
- Corel Painter IX trial
- Royalty free stock photography
- Resources for *DCA*'s workshops

COMPETITION

Win an Epson scanner and a copy of VueScan software. For more details on this exciting offer skip ahead and read page 103

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features

30: Stepping into the big time

Get exposed, build contacts and create your best work as we show you how to stand out from the crowd with our ultimate guide to getting noticed

36: Generation i. Discover how to soup up your system with cutting edge style as Karl Foster takes an inside look at the space age kit that's currently in the pipeline. Want the future now? Then we'll show you how to get maximum performance from the technology that graces today's design systems

41: Wired for sound. Intro themes, backing tracks and sound effects are all staples of visual projects, whether you are cutting a movie, creating animation or setting up a website. The use of sound in your creative projects can add dynamism and reinforce brand values. Karl Foster explains what you need to get wired

84: Illustrating tips for the web. Whether you are a dab hand at web design or just looking for some tips to help you master your illustration workspace, turn to page 84 for the ultimate guide to illustrating for online projects

newswire

Digital Arts Diary

DEC 22 Agenda: The Old Market Hall Arts Centre in Shrewsbury is screening *Agenda* until 29 Jan. Art by seven Shropshire artists, exploring the theme of 'Comfort And Discomfort'. **www.oldmarkethall.co.uk**

DEC 22 Carrara 5: Eovia releases the new version of its 3D modelling package. Carrara 5 includes an improved vertex-modelling engine and will retail for £169, or £379 for the pro version. **www.eovia.com**

DEC 24 No Easy Way: The Watershed in Bristol screens computer-generated 3D animation made using the experimental Motion Ripper tool. The film tells the tale of a mouse and his adopted elephant son. **www.watershed.co.uk**

DEC 26 Science Of Aliens: Running until 26 Feb, this exhibition at the London Science Museum speculates about aliens and alien worlds. Inevitably the design will be just as startling as the science. **www.sciencemuseum.org.uk**

JAN 17 Mobile TV and Video Forum: Held over two days in London, the second annual forum will debate the strengths and weaknesses of competing mobile video technologies in this emerging market. **www.osneymedia.co.uk**

JAN 20 Underworld: Evolution: The sequel to *Underworld* is released today. The first movie was celebrated more for the way it looked than the plot itself. This promises similar standards of design. **www.sonypictures.com**

JAN 23 Script Design Debate: The latest in a series of debates at London's Design Museum asks what design means today and are designers being correctly educated. **www.designmuseum.org**

JAN 30 Porco Rosso: The DVD release of this 1992 animation from Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. It's an action adventure about a man whose face is turned into that of a pig's. **www.play.com**

JAN 31 Hand In Hand: A day devoted to research and innovation at the Watershed. Everything from new techniques for wireless streaming to innovations in computer animation will be covered. **www.watershed.co.uk**

JAN 31 International Digital Film Forum: Taking place between 31 Jan and 2 Feb in Cannes, the conference focuses on creating a market for digital contents that are dedicated to the big screen. **www.idiff.org**

The Big Apple

More power for Mac using digital artists

With iPod taking over the world and iTunes not far behind, it has been a bumper twelve months for Apple. Now Steve Jobs is rounding off the year with more exciting new products for computer-based creatives.

Two new Power Mac G5 desktop computers, the G5 Quad and the G5 Dual, are already hitting the shops, complete with dual-core processors, a new PCI Express architecture and higher performance graphics options.

Meanwhile, Apple's popular range of PowerBook G4 notebooks has been enhanced with higher-res displays and up to an extra hour battery life.

The new Power Mac G5 carries 2.5GHz dual-core processors, each with 1MB of L2 cache. While the G5 Dual has just one dual-core processor, the G5 Quad has two, bringing breakthrough levels of performance to applications. Using the G5 Quad, Final Cut Pro 5 encodes SD video content up to 60 per cent faster, while Adobe Photoshop runs up to 43 per cent quicker than normal. "The Power Mac G5 Quad delivers the workstation performance our creative customers demand," explains Apple's Senior Vice President of Product Marketing, Philip Schiller, "with quad-core processing and the fastest workstation card from NVIDIA, the new Power Mac G5 Quad is the most powerful system we've ever made." Both computers are available now, with the G5 Dual priced at £1,399 and the G5 Quad unit priced at a heftier £2,299.

In the portable arena, Apple has boosted the pixel resolution of its 17-inch PowerBook to 1,680 x 1,050 (36 per cent increase) and the resolution of the 15-inch model up to 1,440 x 960, (26 per cent), meaning more screen space for creatives. The new-look 15-inch PowerBook G4 retails for £1,399, with its bigger brother on sale for around £1,749.

One further eye-catching announcement from Apple is the release of a new software package for digital photographers. Called Aperture, it's an all-in-one post-production tool that provides everything a photographer will need after a shoot. Highlights include an advanced and faster RAW workflow and a set of unique Compare and Select tools that enable photographers to sift through huge photographic projects quickly and easily to identify final selections. Apple's Aperture software is available now, with an asking price of £349.

Comic Expo arrives

Brighton plays host to the UK's biggest ever celebration of graphic novels and artwork

Hundreds of people converged on Brighton's Hilton Metropole Hotel on 19 and 20 November for what was billed as a comic festival "on a scale never before seen in the UK."

Comic Expo brought the world of graphic novels to a wider audience, with in excess of 150 exhibitors and over 100 high-profile guests in attendance. Most major book and comic publishers, along with animators and digital game developers, were in attendance. The event had a vibrant atmosphere with artists sketching on site, workshops and film and game previews throughout the two days.

Among the guests who appeared in Brighton were *Watchmen* artist Dave Gibbons, Texas-born Gilbert Shelton, the creator of the *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, and Mark Millar, hailed as one of the world's best comic writers. Many respected international artists did official signings and offered portfolio reviews to budding comic book creators.

It was not only an ideal place for industry specialists to meet, share ideas and show off their latest comic book creations, but it also showcased Britain's greatest graphic novel art.

The festival was organised by Dez Skinn, the publisher of magazine *Comics International* and winner of over 20 Eagle Awards. Enthusiastic about the impact on the UK industry, he said, "In Europe, comics are an important entertainment medium. This is proven in their popularity, with France's Angouleme event alone attracting 300,000 people. Expo is a celebration of comics as a legitimate art form and major inspiration for TV and movies."

You can find out more about the expo at **www.comicexpo.biz**

Thanks for the roses

Leeds graphic design company, B&W Studio, scoops four Roses Design Awards

A graphic design studio that only set up shop at Leeds Metropolitan University in January 2005 has scored a major success at the prestigious Roses Design Awards.

B&W Studio received a much-coveted Gold Award for a direct mail campaign that it created and implemented for the Leeds-based charity St Georges Crypt. The company also picked up three Bronze Awards for Best Corporate Identity, Best Use Of Photography and Best Website.

Co-founders of B&W Studio, Lee Bradley and Steve Wills, previously worked for such prestigious clients as Nike, Carlsberg, Harvey Nichols and Shell. Lee was head of design at regional design agency Brahm and Steve was design director at Thompson Design. They got their new venture off the ground with help from Leeds Chamber Of Commerce & Industry, who found them cheap studio accommodation at the University and gave the fledgling company a much needed start-up grant.

Since they were launched in 2001, the Roses Awards have quickly become established as one of the most important in the design industry. This year, over 600 entries from designers and consultancies around the country were received.

After collecting the awards for B&W Studio, Lee Bradley said "To win not just one award, but four on the same night, in the presence of so many supremely talented and gifted people was a fantastic honor, especially as we only established the company ten months ago."

To find out more about B&W Studio and its work, visit the company's award-winning website online at **www.bandwstudio.co.uk**

This month: The good, the bad and the ugly

The good:

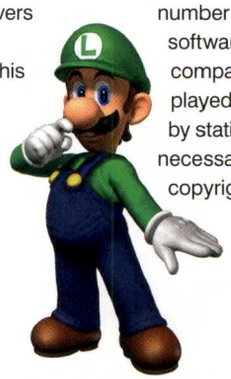
Digital nation. It's been a good month for tech heads in Africa thanks to the findings of a UN world summit. The Information Society summit in Tunisia highlighted a number of new projects aimed at opening up access to the Internet in Africa by using open-source software. They include SchoolNet Namibia, a group that supplies computers and training to Namibian schools, and The Freedom Toaster, a bandwidth substitute that requires no infrastructure except an electricity supply.

The bad:

Video nasties. It's been a bad month for videogames consumers as analysts predict the cost of developing games is likely to soar in the near future as a new generation of consoles hits the market. Currently, the cost of developing a game hovers somewhere between £1.7m and £3.4m, but this figure is likely to rise to around £6m or even higher. Inevitably, the cost will be passed on to consumers, with the price tags of games likely to see a similar hike.

The ugly:

Sony spies. Things are getting ugly for technology giant Sony, due to legal action being taken by a US consumer group. The collective is attempting to sue Sony with claims that there is spy software embedded on some of its CDs, which monitor use by consumers. The Electronic Frontier Foundation says a large number of Sony CDs carry this software to report back to the company every time a disc is played. Sony has responded by stating that the software is necessary to protect its copyrighted music.



HAVE YOU GOT NEWS FOR US?

Are you making the news? Got a story you think the readers of *DCA* should know about? Email us at **dca@digitalcreativearts.co.uk**

Month in numbers

200 million: The amount of users reached by Nero's digital media software suite as the brand celebrates its tenth birthday - happy returns!

24 million: The number of Sony music CDs that a San Francisco consumer group claims contain a piece of spyware for snooping on consumers' listening habits

3 million: The number of Xbox 360 consoles that Microsoft expects to shift within 90 days of its release onto the market

300: The approximate number of games titles currently produced by the world's top ten publishers each year

80: The estimated number of games those same publishers might produce once a predicted hike in costs kicks in

75: The percentage of Adobe and Macromedia shareholders who voted in favour of a merger between the two companies. The acquisition of Macromedia by Adobe was announced earlier this year and has just been given the final go-ahead from US officials

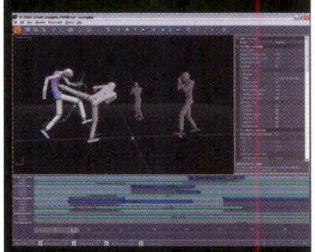
30: The number of Freedom Toasters currently installed in schools, libraries and retail outlets across South Africa

newswire

Software

The latest software releases coming to a computer near you

Cyberlink Power2Go 5: Cyberlink's latest software release, Power2Go 5, offers support for Blu-ray discs and burners. It delivers a range of easy-to-use features for creating video, music and data discs, as well as expanded audio functionality. Data can be burned to all kinds of disc media, including CDs, DVD-/+RW, double-layer DVDs and Blu-ray discs. For more details visit **www.cyberlink.com**



Endorphin 2.5: Endorphin 2.5 is the latest 3D character animation software from NaturalMotion Ltd. Offering new powerful behavioural animation features, enhanced asset repurposing and improved FBX support, it offers users the ability to create realistic, fully interactive 3D character animation for games, film and broadcast production. To find out more about what this program can do surf over to the official website at **www.naturalmotion.com**

Serif PagePlus 11: Serif has upgraded its flagship desktop publishing package, PagePlus, with the release of version 11 of the program. PagePlus 11 contains a range of improved features, such as the ability to import and fully edit PDFs and create new PagePlus documents from PDF content. It offers graphics enhancements so users can perform a range of image adjustments. Go to **www.serif.com** for more info.

London's wireless wonder

UK capital named as one of the top cities for Wi-Fi Internet access

London has been tipped as the second best European city for free wireless Internet access by the Wi-Fi analyst, www.free-hotspot.com.

The UK capital took the silver medal behind Paris in the listing which features more than 80 cities, and included another two UK destinations, Dublin in third and Brighton in fifth.

Wi-Fi, which is also known as 802.11 or wireless networking, allows computers to be connected to the internet anywhere without the need for a physical phone line. Wi-Fi hotspots are mainly found in public places like restaurants, hotels and libraries and were previously charged for, but are increasingly being offered.

Free-hotspot.com's CEO, Daniel C. Toomey Jr. commented, "We are excited that so many European cities offer free Wi-Fi access. Free Wi-Fi is here and it is rapidly expanding."

The boom in Wi-Fi technology is also being seen on the digital camera market. Just a month after Kodak launched its first Wi-Fi consumer camera, Canon has unveiled the much hyped Digital IXUS Wireless.

The device offers the facility for automatic wireless image transfer and wireless control of camera shooting functions from a PC and offers wireless direct printing to PictBridge compatible printers.

The IXUS Wireless, which will be available from the end of this month, is priced at around £399. The camera sports a silver finish and a bright 2-inch LCD display, has 14 shooting modes, a 5.0-megapixel CCD sensor and a 3x optical zoom.

For further details on Wi-Fi, point your browser at **www.free-hotspot.com** and for an insight into the Canon IXUS surf over to **www.canon.co.uk**

fotolia
Source of Inspiration

Fotolia does it better

New online digital stock service is the Internet's first ever 'social marketplace'

Creatives looking for digital stock images are being herded to the recently launched Fotolia site at www.fotolia.co.uk.

The new site houses a library of over 100,000 royalty free images that have been judged for their commercial potential by the site's editing team, which comprises of in-house editors and contributors with expertise in photography, graphic design and illustration.

Shots are placed up for sale by their creators for between £1 and £100, while unapproved images can be download free of charge. Other collaborative features include a designer forum and a photography news blog.

Oleg Tscheltzoff, Fotolia's co-founder and president, said: "Fotolia is designed to be a legal source of inspiration where the creative and visual arts community can interact and benefit from a global image library of quality and originality at an affordable price"

News in brief

The most wanted

An FBI-style website aimed at tracking down the UK's most wanted criminals has proved a huge hit with web surfers, receiving more than 350,000 hits on its first day on the net. The site, **www.mostwanted-uk.org**, was launched by Crimestoppers and features police appeals, CCTV footage and pictures of wanted suspects.

Computer vision lenses

Leading lens supplier Norville has unveiled enhanced reading lenses designed to combat computer vision syndrome. The lenses are aimed at computer users and those that draw upon their intermediate vision for long periods of time. Norville says the cutting edge lenses will give computer users the benefit of a natural head and neck position for comfortable vision.

T-shirt gallery

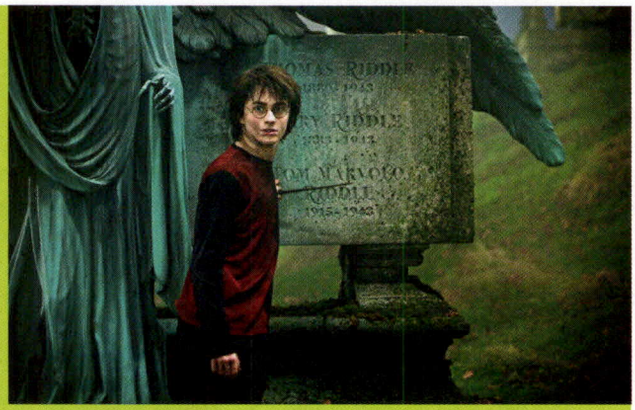
A new urban clothing brand has taken a unique approach to its enterprise, allowing those who register at its **www.subkulture.co.uk** site to submit and vote for T-shirt designs in its 'Endless Tee' gallery. Two new designs are released every month from the gallery in limited runs of 100.

iPods mix it up

A M Micro has been appointed the UK distributor for Numark's innovative iDJ mixing deck for iPods. The new iDJ allows DJs and iPod owners to seamlessly integrate their portable music libraries with other music and sound systems. The device currently retails at £195 ex VAT. For more info go to **www.ammicro.co.uk**

Harry Potter and the VFX

London's leading effects house propels Harry Potter movie into the record books



The latest Harry Potter movie has become the most successful film in UK cinema history, thanks in no small part to the efforts of London's fastest growing VFX house, Double Negative.

Harry Potter & The Goblet of Fire takes the series into darker territory as Harry faces arch nemesis Voldemort for the first time, and hit the spot with fans by making £14.9m in its first three days.

Double Negative's work on the project included key sequences such as the Portkey journey to the Quidditch World Cup, the train journey to Hogwarts, Mad Eye Moody's demonstration of the Unforgivable Curses, and the climactic meeting of Harry and Voldemort.

Director Mike Newell wanted the visuals to reflect the change in tone, as VFX Supervisor Mark Michaels explains, "All the visual effects we've created are based on an organic theme. From the outset Mike was clear that he wanted to steer clear of an overtly magical approach, and instead give it an old-worldly feel based firmly in reality." Under the guidance of Michaels and CG Supervisor Richard Clarke, Double Negative created 500 shots for the film over a 15 month period, more than any other VFX facility working on the project. The work caps another successful year for Double Negative, which has seen highly acclaimed work on films *Sahara*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, *Doom*, and *Batman Begins*.

Founded in 1998 by CEO Matt Holben and MD Alex Hope, Double Negative has been responsible for sequences in films such as *Mission Impossible 2* and *Tomb Raider*. New projects include Oliver Stone's *V for Vendetta*, and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Carraring to go

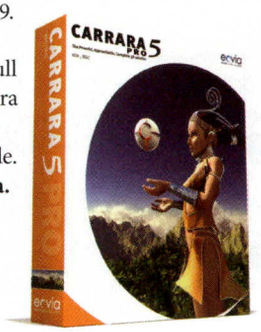
New 3D software from Eovia marks the fifth edition of Carrara

Eovia is back in style this month with the arrival of its brand new flagship 3D animation software Carrara.

Billed as the 'powerful, approachable, complete 3D solution', version five of the program delivers a robust suite of modeling, animation and rendering tools in a freshly updated user interface. It's hoped that this affordable alternative to Alias' Maya will enable users to create more freely and deliver high-calibre results under even the tightest deadlines.

Speaking of the new launch Eovia's CEO Philippe Richard said, "Carrara 5 will stimulate professional users toward greater creativity and help them to stay competitive, while those beginning to venture into 3D will benefit from the incredible ease-of-use and unbelievable results."

Eovia's new release is priced competitively at £169, with the advanced Carrara 5 Pro available for £379. Customers who purchased the full version of Carrara 4 will be eligible for a free upgrade. Visit **www.eovia.com** for further product info.



What's floating our boat and sinking our ship this month...

SWATCH HOT

The New Year

With so many tantalising rumours currently flying around in software and hardware circles, we can't wait to see what 2006 has in store for the creative world.

Advanced Photoshop

You asked, we provided. Our new spin-off title entirely dedicated to Photoshop is going from strength to strength. Grab your copy while you can.

Illegal file share

The number of people using illegal music sharing sites still outnumbers those downloading music legitimately. It's not big and it's not clever guys!

Slimmed down software

Painter Essentials, Carrara Basics, Photoshop Elements - there's never been a better time for you to get you mitts on affordable packages. Quids in!

SWATCH NOT

Thought thieves

Cut price counterfeit goods and media zap £100 billion in revenues and thousands of jobs every year. Microsoft is leading the rebellion!

Ebay crooks

E-buyers beware! This month saw yet more E-bay crooks jailed. Do you know who you are trusting with your money?

Sneaky spy ware

With Sony in trouble for its spy ware CDs, we wonder what other technology is giving away our deepest and darkest secrets.

Microsoft Vista

With one tester version released a month, isn't it about time we got to try out the real thing and stopped all the teasing already?

newswire

Hardware

Check out the latest hardware releases

Fujifilm media card readers: Fujifilm has added four new USB 2.0 media card readers to its product range, which all offer fast transfer speeds of up to 480Mbps. First off the mark is the DCR2-161, a 16-type multi-format reader that costs £34.99. There's also the xD compatible DCR2-XD, the DCR2-71, a seven-type multi-format reader and the four-type multi-reader DCR2-MS, which retails at £12.99. Visit **www.fujifilm.co.uk** for more details.

Sony Cyber-shot T9: The Cyber-shot T9 from Sony is the company's first digital still camera to feature double anti-blurring technology, combining Super SteadyShot and High Sensitivity technology with a Super SteadyShot optical image stabiliser. The 6.0 effective megapixel device, which weighs 134g and is less than 19mm thick, features a Carl Zeiss Vario-Tessar 3x optical zoom lens and a large 2.5-inch LCD. Visit **www.sony.co.uk** for more information.

HP DVD840i and DVD840e DVD writers: The latest DVD writers from HP, the DVD840i and HP DVD840e now feature super multi support and compatibility with the DVD-RAM format, as well as standard double layer media technology. Both drives offer 8.5GB capacity with double-layer DVDs and 4.7GB with single-layer. The new releases can record single-layer DVDs at up to 16x, double-layers at up to 8x and DVD-RAM at up to 5x. For more details surf on over to **www.hp.com**

BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year

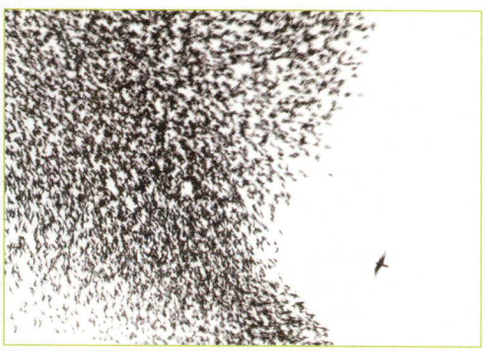
Winners of prestigious wildlife photography contest revealed

© Jesse Ritonen, Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year. The Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition is organised by the Natural History Museum and BBC Wildlife Magazine

The winners of the 2005 Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition have been revealed by the contest's organisers, the Natural History Museum and *BBC Wildlife Magazine*.

Manuel Presti, from Italy, scooped the title of Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2005 for his image 'Sky chase' which shows a swirling flock of starlings evading a peregrine falcon. Ten-year-old Jesse Ritonen of Finland was named Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2005 for his image 'Inquisitive jay', which features a jay perched on a snowy pine branch.

Judge Mark Carwardine, commented: "Sky chase is a powerful image and, like it or not, it's one you will never forget. I particularly like its graphic simplicity and the starkness of black against white. But it works on another level too, because it is full of energy and movement and captures an absolutely perfect wildlife moment."



© Manuel Presti. The overall winning image features a flock of starlings evading the attack of a perguine falcon and won votes thanks to its bold monochrome appeal

On hearing of his win, Manuel Presti, enthused: "At first, winning Wildlife Photographer of the Year was just unbelievable. I was already thrilled to be a category winner, but I didn't expect such a huge success, even though I knew that my picture was significantly different from all the others."

Almost 17,000 photographs were entered into the famous photography competition, from a record number of entrants in over 55 countries.

British photographers also enjoyed a taste of success in the contest, with 13 winners scooping prizes across the 12 adult entry groups and the Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year section.

A. L. Harrington was given the prestigious Gerald Durrell Award for Endangered Wildlife for the shot 'Wolf patrol at ease,' while Jeremy Walker's photograph 'Cascade mountains' took the highly entered, 'Wild Places' category prize.

The prize-winning pictures are featured in a special souvenir magazine free with the November issue of BBC Wildlife Magazine and will also be published in the BBC commemorative book, *Wildlife Photographer of the Year.*

If you're feeling disappointed because you think you could have done better, the annual competition open it's doors for the 2006 edition. Photographers have until have until March 31 2006 to submit their entries. This can be done either through an entry form that will appear in the February edition of Wildlife Magazine or online at **www.nhm.ac.uk/wildphoto.**

Digital Reads

To get all round input for your creative computing needs, why not check out some of our fantastic sister titles?

Web Designer

Issue 114 £5.99
On Sale 08/12/05

Web Designer 114 delves into the psychology of websites, helping designers to harness the power of their site with a powerful insight into the minds of its users. The title also contains essential features on navigation and blogging.

iCreate

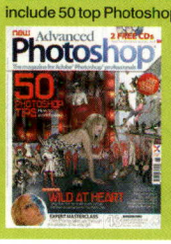
Issue 26 £6
On Sale 22/12/05

The latest issue of *iCreate* guides you through obtaining Mac software and games completely free of charge. There's tips on the easiest way to organise your life with a Mac, as well as sharing the usual selection of tutorials, hints and tricks.

Advanced Photoshop

Issue 3 £5.99
On Sale 08/12/05

This magicazine has it all. Highlights in the latest issue of *Advanced Photoshop* include 50 top Photoshop tips and interviews with top fashion photographer and imageer, Tim Bret Day and Henrik Holmberg, one of the new masters of Photoshop.



Digital Photographer

Issue 41 £5
On Sale 22/12/05

The main features in the current issue of *Digital Photographer* delve into the realms of winter sports, aerial and self portraiture photography. There's also interviews with the legendary Wolfgang Tillmans and imageKaren Oxman.

A plug-in isn't just for Christmas.

This month sees the launch of RenderMan® for Maya, Pixar's next generation plug-in tool for Maya artists. Escape Studios provide both the software and the training for the full RenderMan® suite of tools. Contact us for special bundle prices throughout the Christmas period. Escape Studios is a hub of 3D and visual effects expertise providing training, software and talent to the CG industries. Find out more by visiting us online at www.escapestudios.co.uk.

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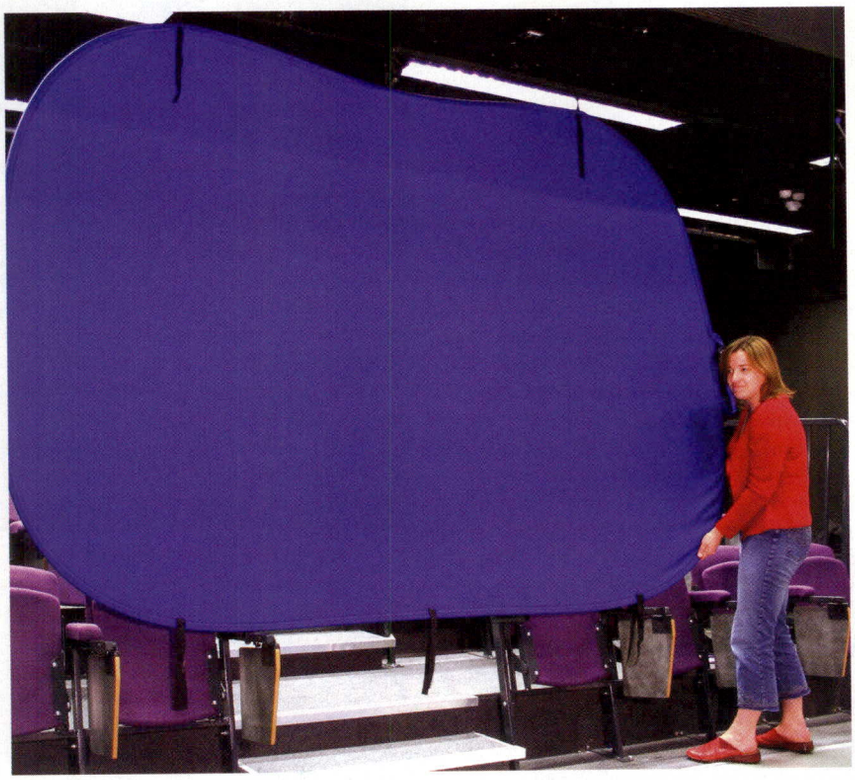
What's on your mind? Whether you want to tell the world about your work, comment on someone else's or just let us know what's hot and what's not in the latest **DIGITAL CREATIVE ARTS,** Feedback is the place to do it. So go on, get in touch...

Star letter
Receives a year's subscription to *Digital Creative Arts*. Write in now for your chance to win...

SUBJECT: Cover lover
FROM: Joseph Fitzgerald , Liverpool

Thanks for an awesome issue of *DCA*. I must confess that recently I had stopped reading your magazine as I felt there were other titles that better suited my creative needs. The last edition (Nov/Dec 2005) really caught my eye and I love the new look. In particular the front cover really grabbed my imagination, but I was disappointed not to find any information on how to create this effect inside. Are there any plans to do a tutorial on this?

In the words of a certain Mr. Jackson, "you are not alone." We've been inundated with similar requests since the issue hit the shelves. It seems Sam Gilbey's cover illustration has really entranced the masses. So you'll find a feature length tutorial on recreating his style on page 46.



SUBJECT: Bluescreen blues
FROM: Katrina Ogilvie, via email

After reading issue 21 of *Digital Creative Arts* I decided to complete your exciting film making tutorial entitled 'Bluescreen on a budget' (page 80). In it you stated that the workshop will "show you how to shoot your own bluescreen footage" and also "where to get the cheapest rigs" etc.

I found the feature extremely informative and would now like to buy the Lastolite Chromakey Skylite Pro rig that you featured, but to my disappointment you didn't say where to purchase it.

I haven't been able to find a company that sells it anywhere, so I couldn't even do any price comparisons. Please can you tell me where I can order one and how much they cost. It's been driving me mad!

Like a lot of movie-making must-haves, the Lastolite Chromakey Skylite Pro Rig is a highly sought-after piece of film making equipment, and is therefore nearly impossible to find.

Luckily for you we have a dedicated team of researchers and after many phone calls, emails and hair-pulling we have managed to track down the illusive instrument.

Try visiting **www.jigsaw24.com** and you'll be directed to a page where Jigsaw24 is offering the Lastolite Skylite Chromakey bundle that includes everything you need to set up your own 2 x 2m free standing chromakey screen.

The all-in-one kit contains a large Skylite frame, reversible blue/green chroma material, grip head and floor bracket for the frame, all supplied in a useful carry case.

The complete kit will cost you £199 excluding VAT. Call 0870 730 6868 quoting product code G011AJA, or visit the website to order yours straight away.

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Shorts

SUBJECT: Missing files
FROM: Moira Williams, IOW

I was really excited about completing the workshop in your latest issue (Nov/Dec 2005) on designing a Superhero, so you can imagine my disappointment at finding there were no files on the disk to complete the project. I tried drawing my own elements for the tutorial and scanning them in, but it was impossible to follow the steps this way.

We offer our apologies to you and all those readers who were disappointed to find that the files were not included on last issue's CD. Unfortunately the files for this tutorial were not submitted to us until after we went to press. If you'd like to receive them still, please email *dca@digitalcreativearts.co.uk* and we'll get them over to you in a jiffy. Additionally, if for some reason your disk was not included email customerservices@highburygroup.com and request a copy.

SUBJECT: Free and empowered
FROM: Ralph Geller, via email

Thanks for the feature on Photoshop power-ups last issue (Nov/Dec 2005). I was already aware of a lot of the things you mentioned but there were other points I hadn't even considered. I put them into practice and I've now freed up more memory and my Mac isn't as slow as it was.

Which philosopher once proclaimed, "it is the smallest of changes can make the biggest of differences"? It probably came out of a fortune cookie to be fair, but the meaning is still true. Just switching off all unnecessary programs and watch as a titanic difference takes place.

feedback

Shorts

SUBJECT: Striking the right balance
FROM: Ricky Renoir, Essex

Digital Creative Arts **magazine currently seems to lean heavily towards Photoshop and Illustrator software at the expense of movie and audio art. Do you think you could possibly readdress the balance soon?**

We think long and hard about content here at *DCA* Towers but getting just the right balance is tricky. We endeavour to please our readers by including a wide range of digital creative disciplines including Illustrator, and in this issue we have incorporated an eclectic mix of software. However, if you think we are ignoring another fabulous piece of creative programming, please drop us an e-mail.

SUBJECT: Acting our age
FROM: Jen McEntaggart, Lanarkshire

What is going on with *DCA*? Each issue you go 'Behind the Scenes' to inform us how movie magic was made for a new release. Six months ago you were on the cutting edge, indulging us in silver screen classics like; *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* and *Sin City*. Recently things have gone downhill; *The Magic Roundabout, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,* and last issue *The Chronicles Of Narnia*. How old are you guys anyway? Aren't these a little immature for your readership?

Apologies if you feel we have dropped the ball on this one but Behind the Scenes is more about the case of packaging over product. That is to say, we want to know how the effects are created as opposed to what the film is about. It's just unlucky that CGI is used more in kid's films than adult's. Aren't we all just big kids at heart?

DCA NEEDS YOU!

Here at *DCA* we are starting up our very own Reader's Gallery, giving you the opportunity to get exposure for you work.

If you are an amateur animator, unseasoned illustrator, or determined designer who needs a leg up into the impenetrable realms of the design industry, we are here to help, our name is Opportunity and we have come a knocking!

Send a sample of your work to dca@digitalcreativearts.co.uk in either a jpeg, pdf or tif format, and make 'Reader Gallery' the subject heading of the email.

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Exclusive interview with Charlie Waite
The great outdo
Capture stunning seasonal imag
HOW TO...
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Get your paws on Corel's new editing software
IMAGE EDITING
Colour to mono in minutes
Bring faded photos back to life
Create glamorous portraits
Apply dazzling lighting effects
SOLUTIONS
Don't let the winter months fool your digital camera's exposure system

SUBJECT: Picture perfect
FROM: Jamie Roudenburg

I'm a student studying Computer Illustration at art college. My tutor is always telling us to read titles like yours to get a greater understanding of our subject. I really like the magazine but wish it incorporated more photography skills, as my current module is adapting photographs and I'm rubbish at taking pictures. Do you have any plans to incorporate this into *DCA*?

Thanks for the suggestion Jamie, and you're right a great deal of the projects we feature usually start with a photograph. Traditionally we always list details of recommended stock photography sites in our Resources section. For actual photography advice look out for upcoming issues as we plan to feature tutorials on shooting your own snaps soon. In the meantime try one of our sister-titles. *Digital Photography Made Easy* is great for the total beginner while *Digital Photography User* (left) caters for amateur camera users.

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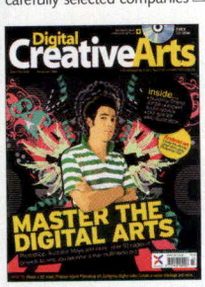

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return of the king

Peter Jackson has brought *King Kong* to life for a new generation of cinemagoers. But how did he do it? Mark Chacksfield delve into his production diaries to find out…

In 1933, a film emerged that would change how special effects would be used in cinema forever. *King Kong* was a stop-motion masterpiece. Aided by SFX expert Willis H O'Brien – who later went on to inspire the likes of Ray Harryhausen – the film's protagonist was a terrifying monster whose rampage through the streets of New York and climb up the Empire State Building is still one of the most iconic images committed to celluloid. *Lord Of The Rings*' director Peter Jackson had his work cut out to reproduce the magic seventy years later with his version of *Kong*. But at least he had the help of some of the best digital artists in the world for the project.

Staying faithful to the original story meant that Jackson's update would have some spectacular set-pieces that would witness the titular ape battle it out with T-Rex's, a completely digitised sail to Skull Island and, of course, the legendary Empire State Building crescendo.

To satisfy today's CGI-savvy audiences, Jackson would have to rely on a huge team of special effects wizards of Gandalf proportions to create his vision. Luckily, his wizards came in the guise of WETA Digital, a visual effects company started up by Jackson and a handful of his filmmaking buddies in 1993, to produce the effects for his film *Heavenly Creatures*.

The company now has close to two hundred employees and a number of subsidiaries – WETA Ltd and WETA Workshop – to ease the post-production process. Inevitably, though, with a film that purportedly blew its $150 million budget by some $50 million, the task was nothing less than an arduous one.

With all the principal filming complete, it was up to all those working on *Kong*'s post-production to finish the film in 33 weeks. A number somewhat eerily linked with the original *Kong*'s release date of 1933.

It may seem like a lot of time, but as Annette Williams, VFX Production Manager on the film explains, order still had to be maintained. "WETA Digital had to be fed work in a sensible way to make sure that all the big stuff wasn't left to the end." A simple request but one that desperately needed to be adhered to, especially considering the monumental workload the company had to deal with.

"Like any film studio on its own, all the things you have to do for live-action shooting, you have to do here," explains Stephen Buckley, WETA Digital's Senior Animator about the immense workload the team faced. Lee Bramwell, Buckley's Camera Supervisor, explains further: "People have to build models [in-computer], costumes, deal with lighting, animation, painting, touch-up, compositing… They then have to take all these elements and fit them all together."

This 'fitting together' part of the process is made all the harder by Jackson's inclusion of virtual stand-ins for all the key actors. While it substantially cuts down on the number of stunt people used, it meant that animators had to do some processes differently, as Bramwell was to discover: "We're not just integrating CG with live action, but sometimes it's integrating live-action elements into CG and miniatures."

A further aspect of the post-production process that's essential to creating a sense of realism is that of rotoscoping, the manual process of cutting out elements that aren't wanted in a scene and leaving in those that

1. Jack Black
Jack Black heads up an amazing cast in the *King Kong* remake, starring alongside Hollywood favourites Naomi Watts and Adrien Brody

2. T-Rex
Jackson wanted to remain loyal to the story which meant digitally creating a gargantuan T-Rex for the colossal battle scene

3. The king
The hairy ape was created using 100% CGI with British actor Andy Serkis (from Gollum fame) providing the movement for animators to work on

are. This painstaking process is one that Jackson can't speak more highly of: "One of the most busiest areas is the rotoscope and paint department. They are the unsung heroes who take shots and make them as real as they can." It is rotoscope artist George Oliver though who describes his work the best. "Essentially you can think of roto as a digital cookie cutter."

Breaking digital boundaries

It was the finer details of the 1933 version of *Kong* that audiences found so captivating. From the ruffling of Kong's fur to his human-like facial expressions, the extra special details took painstaking hours and days to complete. With the advent of computers, 3D imagery and the like, as technology breaks new boundaries the people working with the technology can create new and wondrous things, such as breathing new life into classic films.

When it comes to digital technology, WETA is no stranger to breaking boundaries; in fact the company was the first to pioneer AutoDesk's Discreet Lustre program – a digital colour grading system – when it was used for the *LOTR* trilogy. As helmer Jackson explains: "Colour grading is the process of taking the raw negative [that's shot] on the set and manipulating it... Discreet Lustre is a very powerful tool that makes the film stylised and that little bit more real."

Using a tool like Discreet Lustre means that you have to take its power into consideration, not just during the post-production process, but also at the filming stage of a movie. This is something *Kong*'s Director of Photography, Andrew Lesnie, was all too aware of. "I overexposed the negative to make sure all the colour information in the shadows and the highlights were present." But even before the picture can go through the colour grading process, it has to be transferred from 35mm film to digital files. *King Kong* made this transition with the help of an ArriScan, one of the best film scanners available to the industry today.

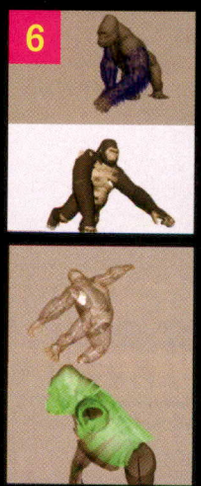
Not surprisingly, one of the biggest obstacles that Peter Jackson and his crew would have to overcome was the "damned hairy ape" itself. Although it was a given that Kong would be created using 100 per cent CGI, Jackson knew he would need some sort of physical performance for the

"Jackson would have to rely on a huge team of SFX wizards of Gandalf proportions"

4. 1933
Post production workers had a mere 33 weeks to complete *King Kong*, a number eerily associated *Kong*'s first release in 1933

5. Skull Island
King Kong was created on Jackson's impressive bank of 1008 computers housed in Wellington's WETA studios

6. CGI magic
The process for creating Kong was a lot harder than creating Gollum in *LOTR* because a full facial capture was needed as well as a full body capture



animators to work from. That performance would come from British actor Andy Serkis. Jackson worked with Serkis previously on *Lord Of The Rings*. The actor had played the character of Gollum – albeit in a motion-capture way. In *King Kong*, he does the same thing, playing the ape in a motion-capture studio so that the animators had a basic outline from which to make their version of the giant ape. But as Lisa Wildermoth, *Kong*'s First Assistant Operator of motion capture explains, the process was slightly different than the one used in *LOTR*. "Motion capturing Kong was way harder than Gollum – ten times harder. For Kong, we're doing a full facial capture, as well as a full body capture."

In practice this meant hundreds of hours in a motion capture studio with Serkis literally going ape whilst covered in motion sensors. His movements were then fed into a computer ready for the 3D animators to work their magic. This process may be a physically taxing one, but it brilliantly produces the results the animators desperately need. "With the motion cameras, we can figure out where these markers are moving in 3D," explains Mark Sagar, *King Kong*'s Special Projects Supervisor, speaking of Serkis' duties. "We can see what muscle groups on Andy's face are moving. From those muscle groups, we can map these expressions, as humans and gorillas have similar musculature."

Processing power

Such extraordinary data input meant that WETA Digital needed an extraordinary amount of hardware. Enter Peter Jackson's post-production arsenal – all 1008 computers of it. Using Linux's Redhat 9 operating system, the thousand-plus computers were all packed with powerful Intel 2.8 Gigahertz Xeon processors that were vigorously controlled by over 500 IBM dual Blade servers. Enough of the tech-speak, what this means is Jackson's supercomputer, housed in his WETA studios in Wellington, is the 104th largest computer in the world. Not bad for a studio that started with just one simple work station in a small room a mere 12 years ago.

These computers were certainly tested to their limits. The team used Digital Vision's Nucoda Colour Timer to help integrate its DI (Digital Intermediate Grading) into its workflow and, of course, Alias' Maya software as its core package to create the movie's abundance of 3D animation.

No matter how much imaging power is behind a film, however, at the heart of the production has to be a compelling enough story to engage audiences. *King Kong* has one such story. The impact the original film had on audiences was outstanding. The reason was the ape at the centre.

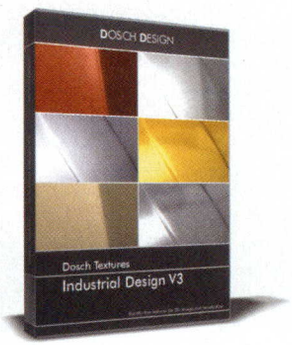
Through the most advanced technology of the time (stop-motion animation) a protagonist was created that seemed every bit as real as the actors and actresses that surrounded him. Skip forward to the Twenty-First Century and Peter Jackson has some of the best actors and technology involved in his project, but an ape every bit as unreal.

If the end result of Peter Jackson's epic adventure is anything to go by, its clear that the likes of Jack Black, Naomi Watts and Adrien Brody know they are playing second fiddle to someone else. So when the big guy hits our screens with that primal roar and strangely human vulnerability, spare a thought for the hundreds of people that made the return of the King possible.

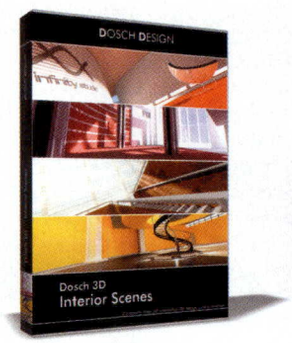
King Kong is out in cinemas now. King Kong's Production Diaries are also available on DVD or at www.kingiskong.net

"Jackson's supercomputer housed in his WETA studios in Wellington is the 104th largest computer in the world"

DOSCH DESIGN

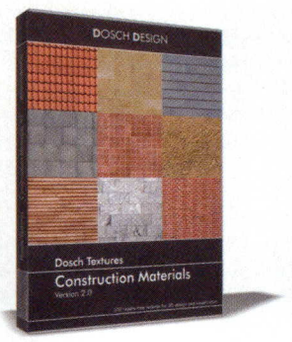


Dosch Textures:
Industrial Design V3

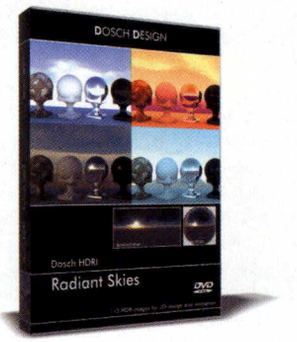


Dosch 3D:
Interior Scenes

Dosch HDRI: **Chrome & Studio Effects V2**

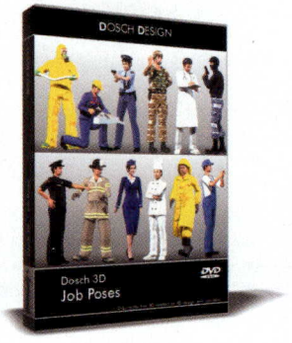


Dosch Textures:
Construction Materials V2

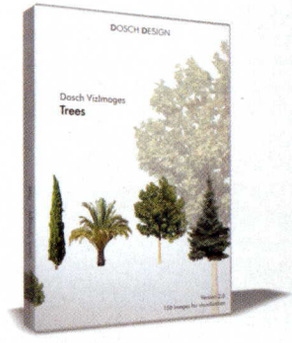


Dosch HDRI:
Radiant Skies

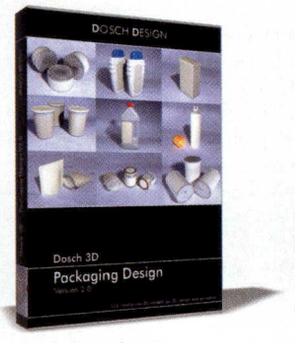
Dosch HDRI:
Extreme Hires



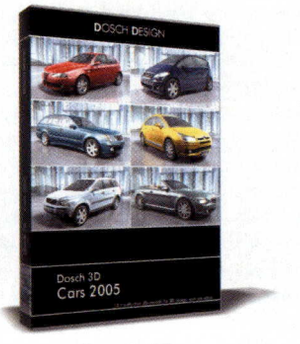
Dosch 3D:
Job Poses



Dosch Viz-Images:
Trees



Dosch 3D:
Packaging Design V2



Dosch 3D:
Cars 2005

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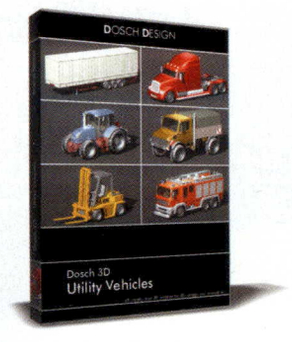
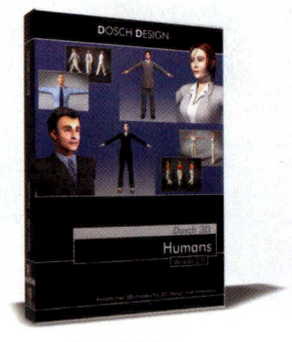
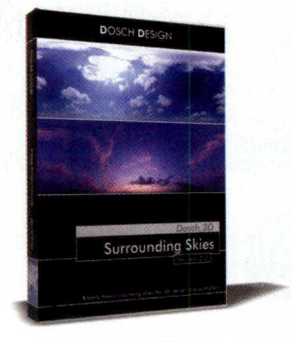


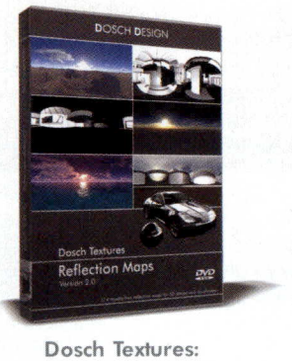
Dosch 3D:
Utility Vehicles



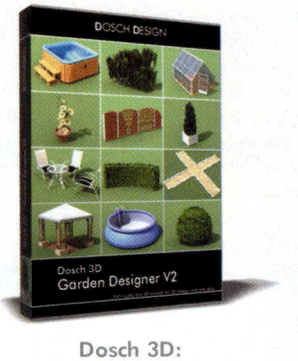
Dosch 3D:
Humans V2



Dosch 3D:
Surrounding Skies V2



Dosch Textures:
Reflection Maps V2



Dosch 3D:
Garden Designer V2

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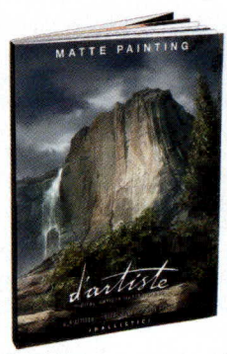

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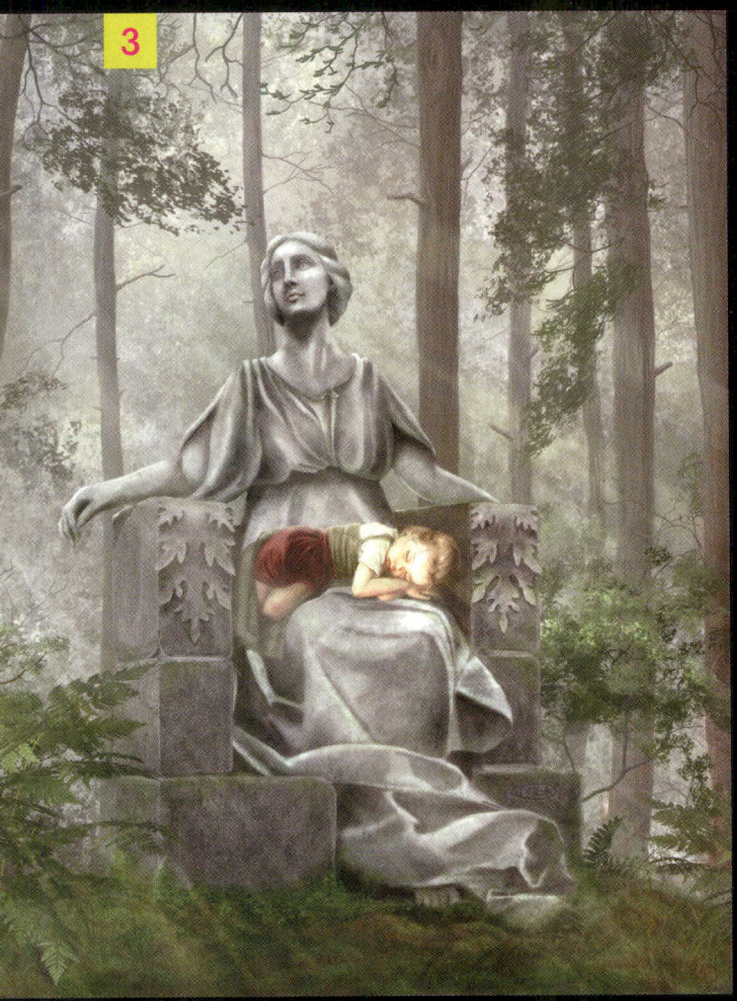
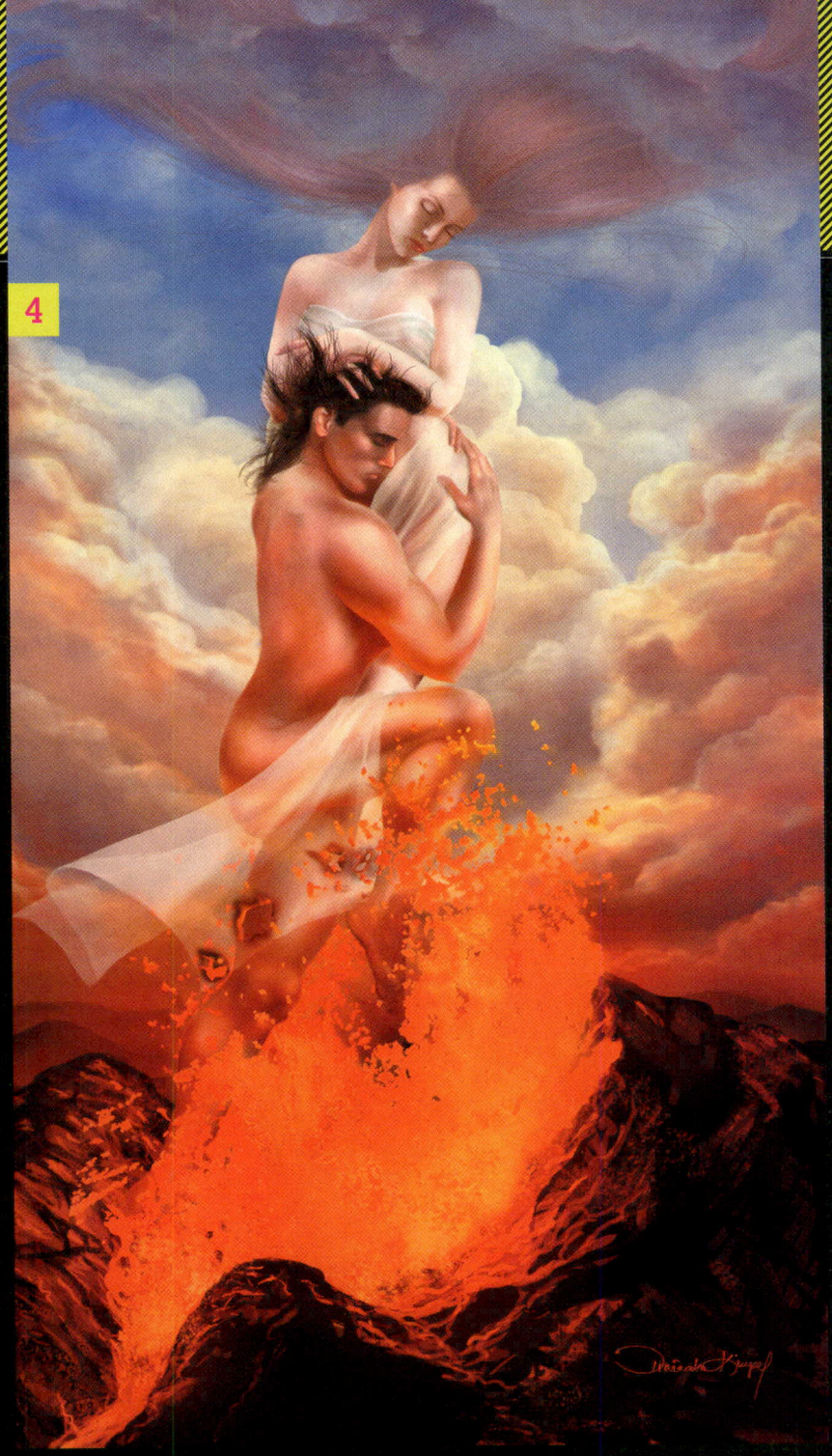
Drazenka Kimbel

From teaching herself how to create art digitally eight years ago, Drazenka Kimbel now takes hundreds of commissions every year. Showing off her fantasy art, she provides inspiration for other self-taught artists





1. Bay Of Nymphs
"I was strongly influenced by Victorian paintings when I made this. It's the largest and the most time consuming painting I have ever painted, completing it took over an entire year using Photoshop."

2. Breath
"Breath was created as a pure self-challenge. I wanted to see if I could bring my character to life using very a limited colour palette. The combination of the both Photoshop and Illustrator worked out better then I could have hoped for."

3. Mother
"This piece was created in the shortest amount of time. Using Photoshop the whole thing just poured out of me in a couple of days. It is influenced by personal events, and represents the basic portrayal of our fragile life and all that is dear to us."

Florida based digital artist Drazenka Kimbel is the embodiment of good old-fashioned natural talent. An inspirational illustrator with a comprehensive range of self-taught Photoshop and Illustrator skills, when speaking of her career she is quick to emphasis the value of mind over means in the creative industry. "I have never had a chance to attend art school," she explains. "I originally taught myself through reading books, following tutorials and through my own mistakes."

For too many people, this system of mastering digital art can be the hardest and longest route into the industry, but thanks to Drazenka's natural creative flair she found that computer arts was an extremely natural progression from her own traditional drawing skills. "The tool I used the most was a pencil, as it was handy and I could fit it into my pocket with a pad of paper. My digital experience only started about eight years ago when I stumbled across the online digital art forums."

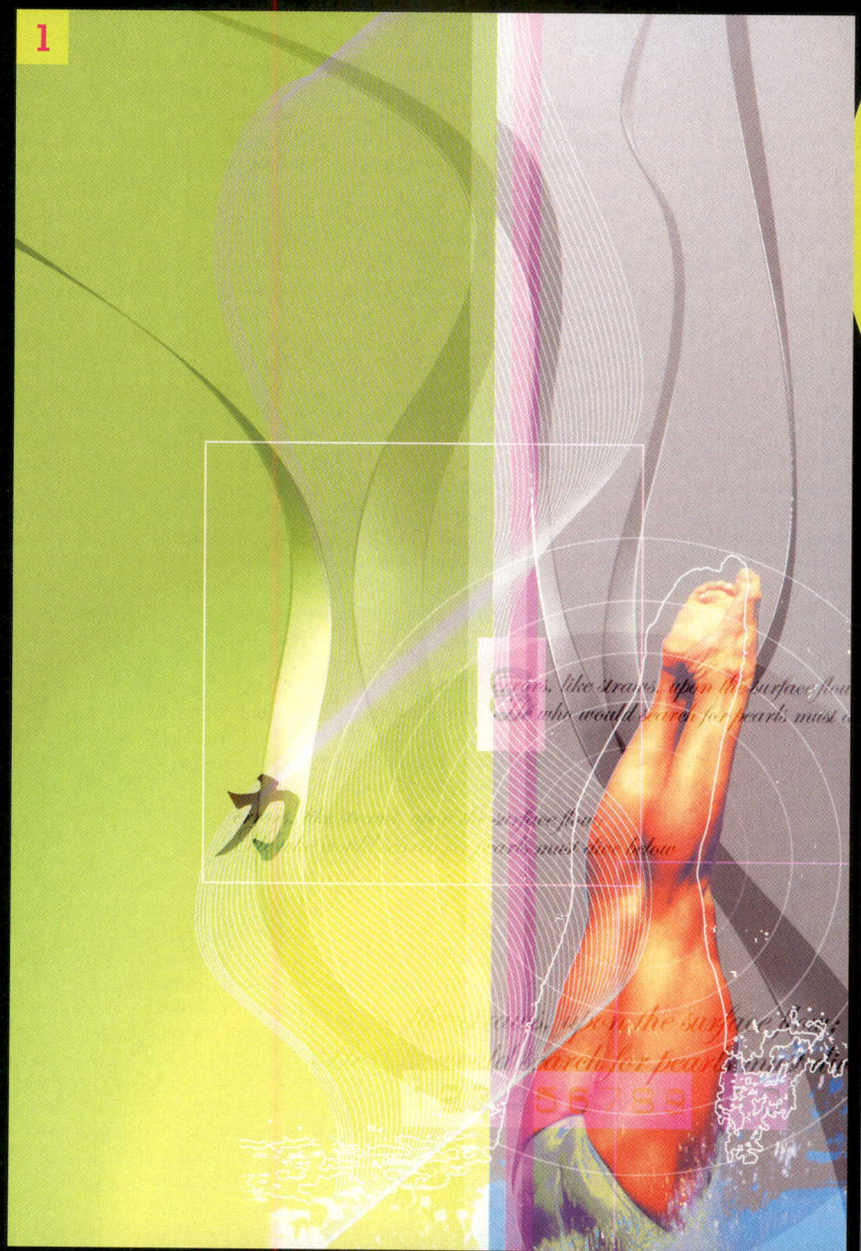
A self confessed workaholic and perfectionist, it's not surprising that the illustrator spends weeks on projects, "I used to work on each piece for way too long. I have learned to control my desire for detail and look at my work with a more critical eye. I like to look at it the next day to see what kind of impression it leaves on me." But this isn't easy for someone who claims to be perpetually inspired. "I just wish there were more hours in the day to get all the ideas on the paper before they fade away from my memory. It sounds bizarre but I see my art as nothing more than a reflection of my personality and my state of mind."

When Drazenka isn't taking commissions from private individuals who want to see themselves as their favourite fantasy characters, she works as a designer for Magicgate Software Inc in Florida. "I am currently working on a vector based illustration for the US Environmental Protection Agency, which will be used as a navigation map for a CD-Rom."

To see more of Drazenka's work, visit her online gallery at ***www.creativedust.com***

4. Vulcan and Air
"This image came to me after much thought. The subject of our earthly elements integrating with each other seemed like a great idea for a painting. In this picture, the element of Air and the element of Earth come together in a whirlpool of energy. It was also a great opportunity to include a wide spectrum of colours to tie the whole painting together. Again I used Photoshop for this."

1



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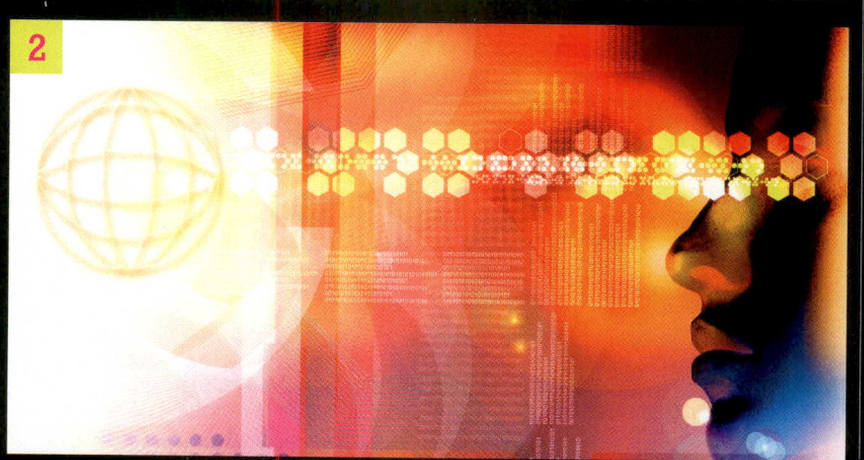

Sara Hayward

Futuristic themes and photographic elements are all part of a day's work in the life of professional illustrator and imageer Sara Hayward

Thanks to their bold colour palette and unique contemporary themes, Sara Hayward's images have a distinctly futuristic look to them.

Sara has now been working as an illustrator for seven years, although she supplements her work by designing part time at Associated News. This leaves her enough time to work on illustrations for a publishing company's website and a US-based pharmaceutical company.

After studying Graphic Design at Exeter College of Art and Design, Sara received her first commission from a stock photography agency. "When I graduated I was commissioned by Digital Vision stock library to produce a disc of fifty images," she says. "After my first job as a graphic designer, I spent some time as an illustrator's agent, which made me much more aware of the industry as a whole."

In order to put her images together, which takes about three hours, Sara uses a wide range of software packages, including Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, as well as Macromedia Freehand. "I photograph some elements myself, or get someone much better than me to do that part, and I occasionally use stock photography," says Sara. Commissions come from clients in both the UK and the US, as she has representation in both countries, and are mostly editorial. Her agent in the UK is the Central Illustration Agency.

1. Dive in

Created in Photoshop and Freehand, this illustration comes from the same series as the image of the gymnast. The main character in the composition balances out the diver and offers eastern symbolisation, meaning strength or power. The faint words fade out of the frame to bring extra impact.

2. In the head

Due to their futuristic appeal and graphical complexity, many of Sara's images are used in technology magazines. The starting point for this image was an photograph of a face, which was then layered up with multiple graphic elements. The final result pleased the American client.

3. The car

In order to attract more clients from the US advertising market, Sara constructed this as personal work to boost her portfolio. Starting with a photo of the car, which looks almost like a CGI vehicle before rendering, she added muted romantic images of birds and butterflies to soften the impact and lend the image a sense of movement. It was created using the combined advantages of Photoshop, Illustrator and Freehand.

4. Balance

The image of the gymnast is an example of Sara's style of lightly layering words and Japanese characters to hint at the theme of the work. This was created in Photoshop and Illustrator from a stock photograph for the financial B2B magazine, Practical Law.

5. Tapped in

This particular composition is one of a series Sara created for Digital Vision. The famous stock library commissioned her to create a collection of fifty illustrations around the theme of "Fast Forward." Using elements from different images, Sara created the final picture using a complex series of layers in Photoshop.

3

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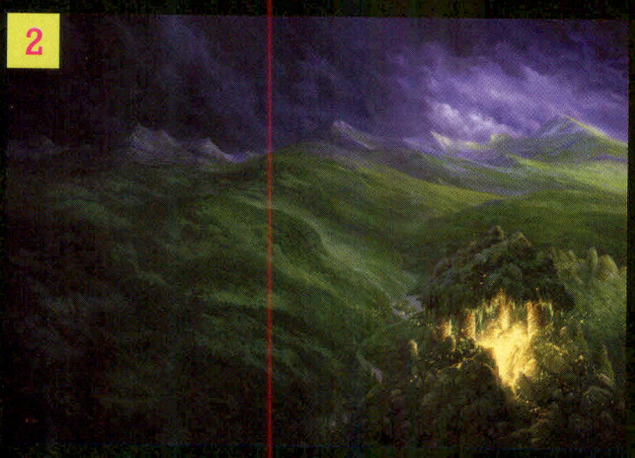
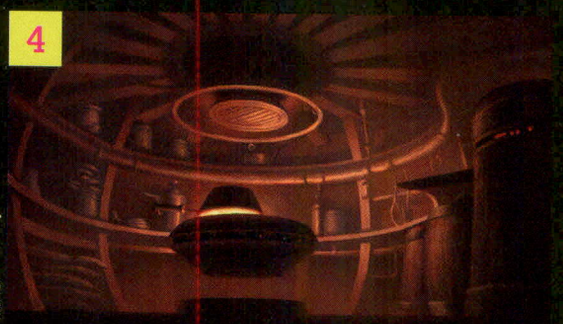
portfolio
christophe vacher

1. Predator's Gold
"This picture is the book cover for *Predator's Gold*, the second novel of the *Hungry City Chronicles* by Philip Reeve. I had done the first book's cover as a traditional oil painting (a technique that I am still very attached to) but I wanted to do the second one in a different media so I painted it with Photoshop.
I gathered references from different old European architectures, and played with them until I found something satisfying for the two cities. The big dark one is the Predator City. The smaller city represents life and hope in a desolated, cold and harsh backdrop."



2. Troll Fell
"Very much like the first one, this picture is also a book cover for *Troll Fell* by the author Katherine Langrish, done in Photoshop.
The foreground's strange edifice is the top of the hill rising up to open a mysterious and magical underground temple where trolls come from inside the earth. The author and art director didn't want any characters, just the strange light to be visible."

3. Highland Warriors
"This cover was made using Photoshop, but this time for a videogame, at DataBecker Videogames, in Germany. The main theme of the game was a highlands' war between clans. The heads in the clouds were representing the different Highland clans, with the second one impersonating the English army."



4. The Destiny
"Like the other *Treasure Planet* images this picture was created for visual development on the popular children's movie. This time, it's the interior of the kitchen on the main cartoon spaceship, The Destiny."

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Christophe Vacher

French born artist Christophe Vacher has 16 year's experience in the design industry, including commissions from Disney. Here he shares some of his favourite projects…

As a graduate of Fine Art and History of Arts, Christophe Vacher has never had trouble finding work in the computer arts industry. From comic books to book covers, games covers to animation, fine art paintings to images for the web – he's done it all and then some.

The LA based artist got his big break courtesy of Disney, where he worked for a further nine years, and is there again now after finishing a contract with DreamWorks.

"In these big studios, you get to meet a lot of amazing artists, who you just watch and learn from everyday. I was called back by Disney to do production design work on one of their next projects a live action animation movie called Enchanted.

Working on a Mac G4 with 1.5GB of RAM and a Radeon 9800 Pro video card, Christophe completes the majority of his work with Photoshop. The artist also specialises in Maya and is now learning ZBrush to increase his range of work.

Vacher is very clear about the inspiration for his art, "Frank Frazetta and Moebius are very inspirational artists. But the discovery of other forms of art (like the European Symbolists, the Great American Illustrators, the Romantics, the Orientalists, the Pre-Raphaelites, and the Hudson River School), have all impacted on me in some way. I guess one of the key elements of my work would be light. I come from an area in France where it rains a lot; so, the changes of light are amazing: pools of lights piercing the clouds, bright blue sky after the rain, and dramatic lighting over the mountains. All this definitely shaped something unique I would hope."

Visit **www.vacher.com** to contact Christophe Vacher and see more from his impressive portfolio.

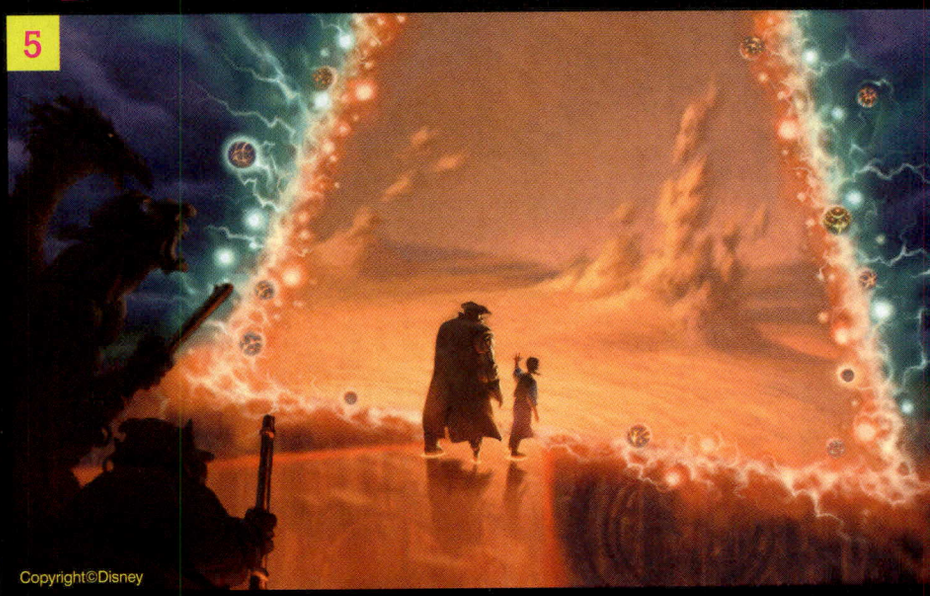
5. Treasure Planet

"This picture was created for visual development work on the Disney animated movie Treasure Planet in 2002. This first piece shows the main characters going for the first time through the portal that leads to the different worlds in the universe and will eventually lead them to the inside of the Treasure Planet.
We did these images with an old in-house program that the Disney people were trying to change into something like Photoshop. My opinion? We should have gone directly for Photoshop instead."

6. Captain Amelia's Cabin

"One more picture on the same movie. This image is the interior of Captain Amelia's cabin. I really liked painting the light in this one. I also loved all the type of technology we had developed on this movie: a mix of futuristic high tech and 18th Century old machines and designs. It was so much fun to be a part of."

5



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digital slam dunk

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Brand Jordan, British illustrator Tim Marrs was commissioned to add his rough and ready style to the slick Nike image. Nat Johnson finds out how this self-acclaimed 'one trick pony' hit the big-time…

Twenty foot high images, a portfolio full of commissions from household brands, and illustration credits in literary, music and sporting fields to name but a few, Tim Marrs hasn't let high profile success go to his head. In fact this down to earth Notts County supporter likes nothing more than going down the pub and playing darts. Confessing to have only mastered the wily beast that is Photoshop, Tim Marrs has had more than his fair share of interesting and well paying clients.

One such client was Nike, which commissioned the 33-year-old to add his own unique flavour of art to visually stimulate the audience at the launch of the new Air Jordan XX high-performance balling shoe. Marrs had just a few weeks to design pieces that would decorate the warehouses in Colorado and California housing the events to coincide with the NBA Allstars game.

DCA: How did Nike approach you?
TM: I was asked to do three double page spreads for the magazine *Brand Jordan* through my agent in America, which led on to the event for the 20th basketball boot. My designs were blown up and backlit on 20ft walls which was very exciting to see. It was really brave of them to use me as my style is very rough and ready, and their style is very slick. The nice thing was they took the black and white prints after the event and instead of throwing them away, made up these bags and they kindly sent me one.

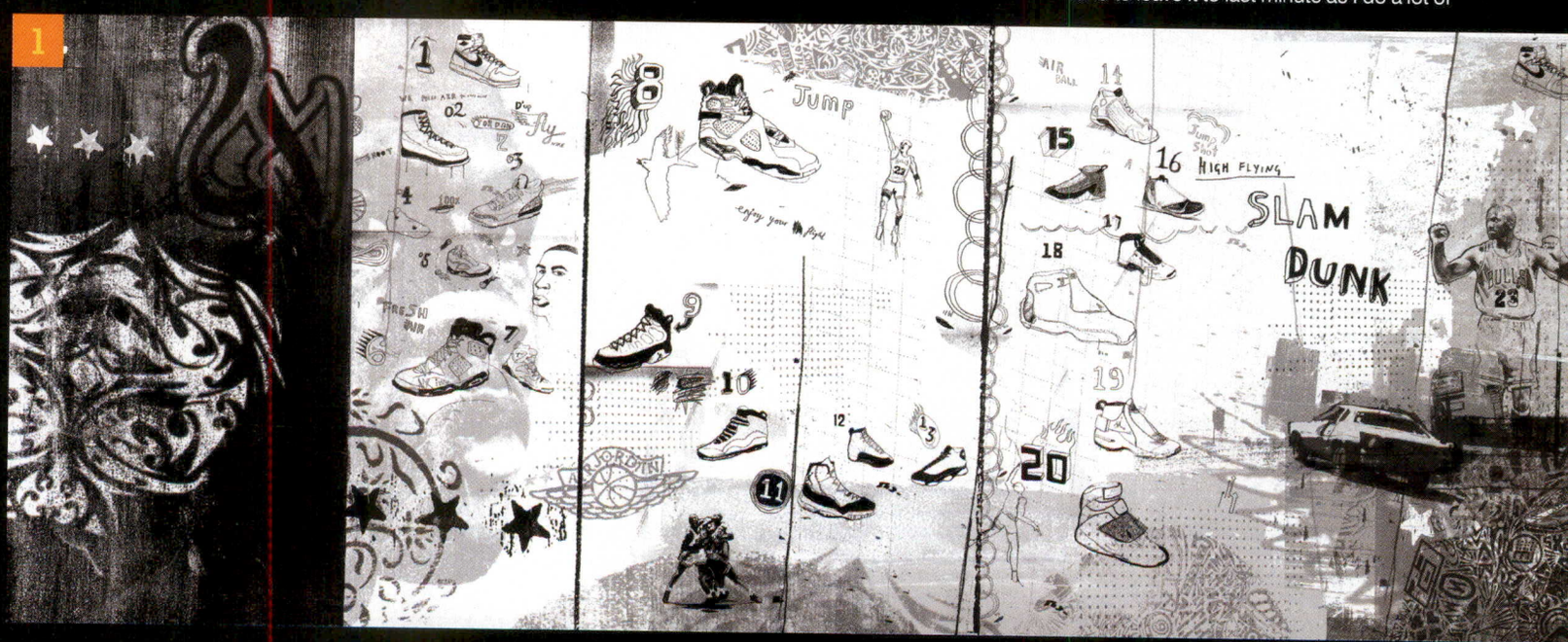
DCA: Did Michael Jordan have any input?
TM: I don't think so, Brand Jordan has it's own design company and I dealt with the Art Director there, and he pretty much had the final say. There were never many changes which was something I was quite blessed with. I would send a high resolution rough and they'd want something moving or something written, but that was it.

DCA: Take us through the process you went through from conception to creation?
TM: When I do projects like this I start by looking at the photographic reference they would like you to include. Only they had sent so much I was aware that if I wasn't careful this stuff would drown out my own creativity as I wanted to make everything look quite rough and ready and hand-made looking. I used Photoshop to complete my hand drawn work which broke up parts that had too much photographic reference.
I started with a sketchbook to think about positioning as this thing was going to be over ten foot tall. I tried to exploit that by writing little things that people might stumble across, if I did it again I might push that further. A lot of it is very basic sketches but I do a lot of it in my head which comes with experience. You have an idea and you see it in your head and you almost skip the sketch-book stage.

DCA: How long did the project take?
TM: Three to four weeks. Like everything I tend to leave it to last minute as I do a lot of

1. Footwork
Tim spent weeks drawing the individual balling shoes, placing them together to make this giant black and white mural

2. Warehouse
Two run down warehouses were transformed by Tim's art, reinforcing the rough edge that makes his unique style



"I still use a mouse, I should really get a graphics tablet but I'm too tight"

"umming" and "ahhing", I got a bit panicky thinking, "I've got to do something really special", and then I thought "Oh stop being a prat!" And I just got stuck into it in the end. I did such a huge amount in one weekend because the deadline was brought forward and I hadn't done enough. Quite often that's the best way to work when the deadline becomes tight because it forces your hand and you have to make decisions quicker.

DCA: Did you have to go back to the drawing board at any point?
TM: No I was very lucky - I just blinded them with colour and texture and they were like, "Ooh look at that, that's nice." It was more "Can you add this or add that?"

DCA: Is there anything you would change?
TM: It probably could do with some redesign, because there was one area they misinterpreted on a plan. I had included these angled hands that were originally meant to go around a basketball court. In the end they didn't have it where it was supposed to be, so there was this weird cut out of hands, which was the only thing that frustrated me. Apart from that it all went really well. It was a dream working for a sport-orientated brand as this opens are more opportunities in the future.

DCA: What hardware/software did you use?
TM: I just used Photoshop. It's quite literally a process of building hundreds of layers in Photoshop, no filters, no dodgy-ness. I just play with the opacity and bring in textured elements, pretty much like you would in a screen print. I don't get involved with funny vectors and bits and bobs like that. I've never really had time to extend my knowledge; I'm a one trick pony. Obviously I use a digital camera, and a scanner to import textures I have created in a sketchbook or the odd bit of screen-printing. I still use a mouse, I should really get a graphics tablet but I'm too tight!

DCA: How do you describe your style?
TM: It's hand made-textured-screen-print-looking-computerised stuff. I've been inspired by a lot of pop art, and my girlfriend used to work in a vintage film poster store so I'd get inspired by the colours and the composition. So it's possible my work has a retro feel too. I don't want my work to look as though it is computer made, so it's important that I throw some drawing in there because not everyone can draw. Compositionally we all fall into the trap of using similar colours or putting things together in a similar style. You have to keep a look out for different ways of working.

DCA: When did you first become interested in illustration and digital art?
TM: I did a foundation art course and had to make a decision, like most art students, whether I should do a graphic design or an illustration degree. I ended up doing a broad based illustration degree at Hull University. The course was a bit dire as we were kind of left to our devices and then spat out into the big wide world feeling numb. I took two years out working for local companies up in Notts and then moved down to London ten years ago where I did a Masters at St. Martin's. This saved me from oblivion, gave me confidence and introduced me to various ways of working. The rest is history.

DCA: That's a bit of generalisation – who gave you your big break?
TM: I still feel I'm kicking under as opposed to being totally known. I'm more established in America than I am in this country. I started by sending out personalised samples of my work and got various music mags interested, giving me jobs that were either unpaid or not paid very well. From that you have a couple of images people know you for and you start getting commissions. I was commissioned to work on a Lucozade ad campaign just from what they had seen in my sketchbooks. In the end they only used my hand-rendered type, which was fine as they were paying me lots of money, and I didn't have the experience to be able to respond to their bastardised versions of my work. Sometime after that I got on the Central Illustration agency books which got me some exciting jobs that side of the pond.

DCA: Where can people see your work?
TM: I'm a bit weird in that I don't really notice it. I did the hand-rendered type for the book cover of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. It was quite nice to be

2

Quick draw

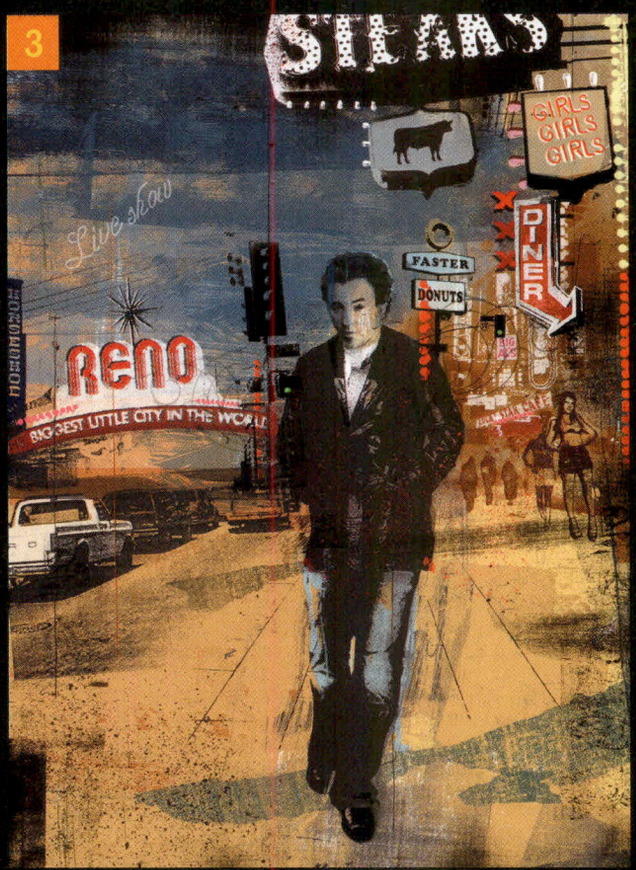
Describe yourself in five words?
Smiley. Big. Metal. Food. Pubs

Who is your greatest idol?
My Gran as she was my inspiration

What would your plan B career be?
Butcher. I imagine myself putting on five stone and selling the best sausages in Nottingham

What's your favourite film?
City of God

What would you say is the biggest cliché in your particular field of work?
That all illustrators are lonely sad people who work in dark rooms because we're not!



3. Springsteen
This is one of Tim's favourite magazine illustrations. It's an image of Bruce Springsteen walking along a side walk in Reno, America

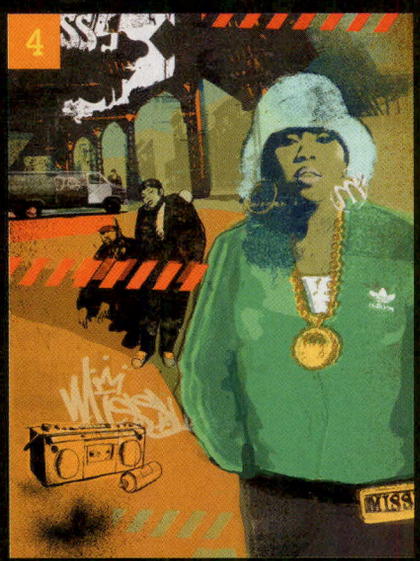
4. Missy Elliott
One of Tim Marrs most recognised pieces of art. The Missy Elliott image was commissioned by *MOJO* magazine

5. Brand Jordan
This artwork was used in the *Brand Jordan* magazine, and was responsible for getting Tim's unique rough and ready style noticed. This work led on to the commission for the Brand Jordan event

commissioned to just do the type because it's another string to your bow. My Missy Elliott work seems to crop up a lot, I did that for *MOJO* magazine, which got me a lot of jobs on other American hip hop mags, but I can't stand that music. But sometimes I think it's good to work on something that you're not necessarily passionate about as you can respond to it in a more honest way.

DCA: Other than the Brand Jordan work, what other career highpoints have you had?
TM: I did a CD cover and inlays for an American band called Something Corporate. It was a good job in the sense I had lots of freedom. They were really lovely people and they invited me to a couple of their concerts with passes for access all areas. They took the imagery I created and applied it to so many different things which is always flattering, and an ego boost if nothing else.

DCA: What are you up to at the moment?
TM: I'm doing a series of book covers for Elmore Leonard's books and that's another dream job for me because Elmore Leonard and that style of writing is one of my



favourites. To actually do a whole series of his book covers has been fantastic, and it's a good little earner.

DCA: In a perfect world what would be your dream commission?
TM: I would love to get my artwork moving, the way that it's made shouts to be moved because of the layers and the different sort of compositions with line drawn stuff and textures. I'd have to work alongside someone who was good with Adobe After Effects. A music video would be pretty cool too. It would be in the style of the new iPod adverts, which made me realise "Shit I should have moved my work about two years ago." Just the idea of mixing live footage with my stuff would be pretty exciting to see.

DCA: Do you have a long-term goal?
TM: Not really. I just want to keep my work fresh and moving it forward to avoid it getting stale. You do go through stages where you lose the will to work and you think "God my work looks shit" or "Christ what am I doing?" But if you have the things in place, and you know how to break it down, everything turns out well. I would love to get back into screen printing. I've only ever done basic screen prints but I think it would be really lovely to make proper physical artwork for a change.

DCA: What pearls of wisdom would you like to share with the readers of *Digital Creative Arts* magazine?
TM: When I first finished my MA my work was so rough, but it didn't deter me from going out and speaking to potential clients. Generally the response was good and they gave me advice about keeping my integrity and not changing my style but also to remember to be flexible with the clients ideas as it is their money after all. It's a question of keeping the faith. You have to be realistic in that you're not going to make money straight away, and the last thing you want is to be some flash in the pan and get over exposed and then not used again. My most positive thing was when I stopped working at home and joined a shared studio. If you get the opportunity to share a studio it really helps the whole work ethic, as you have like-minded people motivating you. You have the option then of working as a collective and promoting yourself as a group. Just keep believing - keep the faith!

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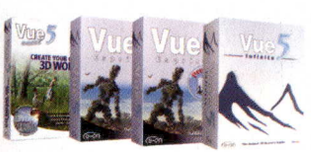

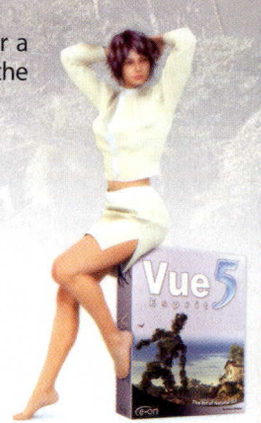

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TAKE
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SOUND

Stepping into the big time

Getting your first big break is never easy, but if you work hard, persevere, and develop your skills you'll soon land your dream job says DAVE HOWELL

Whatever creative industry you have ambitions to break into, the competition you face can seem overwhelming. The new media industries in particular have exploded over the last few years and now offer an array of opportunities. But with thousands of new graduates entering the marketplace each year, how do you kick start your career?

Your first big break

So, what kind of job would you like? It may seem like an easy question to answer, but do you want to work in a specialised area, or do your skills extend over a number of disciplines? These days it's increasingly attractive to employers if you have more than one skill. For instance, if you want to work in web design, you're more likely to get your first big break if you have additional skills over and above those needed to build a site. As Keith Moutter, Creative Specialist, The Book (www.thebook.uk.com) describes, "I have seen more and more clients looking for designers with a portfolio of skills, not just the basic ability of producing a well designed, functional site. I feel it is an advantage to be fluent in a full range of skills. I personally work with a number of new media agencies and they always look for fluency in at least four or five main areas of web design. A specialist web designer seems to be the type of person who does have a full range of skills with software in addition to an unbelievable creative ability."

Selling the skills that you have is ultimately how you will break into your chosen industry. How you do this can take a number of forms, but the most crucial marketing weapon you have is your portfolio. You can not have failed to notice the increase in online portfolios that have now become a part of the design landscape. In your industry it's what you can do that counts to prospective employers. They simply don't care which university you went to, or who your teachers were. All they want to know is what you, as a designer, can do for them. Your portfolio should showcase your best work, but also illustrate what kind of designer you are. Companies who are commissioning creative people want to ensure that you 'fit' with their company, and that the work you will produce complements their brand identity. Take a look at your current portfolio. What does your work say about you? Does it reflect your particular design sensibilities?

Of course you don't have to work for someone else. With the Internet now helping thousands of designers' to set-up their own

stepping into the big time

businesses, this could be a route for you that could prove to be the best move you ever made. But starting your own business is not to be taken lightly as designer, illustrator and writer Sam Gilbey (www.personalspaceinvaders.co.uk) explains: "Make sure you've got some repeat clients, ones who are supportive enough to be thinking of more projects to send your way when you make the move. Try and line up a few projects you can get stuck into from day one. Get to the point where you really can't do your job and the freelance and remain sane. That's when you can truly be confident you can lose the monthly pay cheque. Save up some cash to keep you going for a few months. People can be less keen to pay you on time than they are to commission you in the first place. Oh, and also make sure you get in touch with the Inland Revenue!"

If you do intend to set-up your own business, there is plenty of help and information available to make the process as painless as possible. Initially you will need to make sure that your business type is set-up properly. If you're not sure if you need to register as a self-employed person, take a look at the leaflet IR56 from the Inland Revenue (www.hmrc.gov.uk/pdfs/ir56.htm). Do this as soon as you start trading or else you'll get a fine of £100 if you haven't registered within three months of starting your self-employment. It's also a good idea to read the leaflet 'Thinking of Working for Yourself' at: www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/se1.pdf.

Helping hands

The key creative industries never stand still. Film making for instance has taken a few technological leaps over the last few years that'll make your head spin. The skills that you have now will clearly become out-of-date soon, so keep an eye on what's happening in your industry. And as Bruce Steele, Director of Visual Effects/Head of Special Projects at Glassworks (www.glassworks.co.uk) points out, it's really up to you when it comes to training and gaining the skills you need to land a job, "It's tough to break into CG, as the equipment costs the same for us whether you're a beginner or an experienced animator. If we put someone next to you to teach you it then that costs twice as much! So learn how to do the job

How to get noticed

1: Enter competitions
One great way to get your work into the limelight is to enter any competitions that run in your field. You'll have a chance to submit work along with your peers. For instance, if you're a Flash designer, there is the annual Flash Forward (http://flashforwardconference.com) competition you could enter.

2: Build your identity
Even if you have no plans to start your own business, you still need to market yourself professionally. This means giving yourself a business identity that employers can understand. Start with your stationery from Printing.com (www.printing.com). Get a brochure printed up that showcases your best or most influential work and mail it to potential clients.

3: It's who you know
They say that it's who you know and not what you know that ultimately gets you your first job. If no one knows who you are and what skills you have to offer, then you're not going to get any work. Attend trade shows, and any other business gatherings where you can hand out your promotional material.

4: Build your portfolio
Your portfolio is the key to breaking into the industry, so spend some time and money building yours. You should have a physical selection of your work that you can leave with prospective clients, but also place your material online. Today, the online portfolio is a proven way to get your work noticed.

5: Don't just sit there!
Even when you are waiting to hear from potential clients you should be developing your skills and looking for new avenues to explore. Perseverance is the key in the creative industries. Get your work showcased in the trade magazines or even write a few tutorials.

The Illustrator

Rob Coke, Partner, Studio Output (www.studio-output.com)

Rob Coke studied typography at London College of Printing, and got a graphics degree at Nottingham Trent University. After working for twelve:ten, a local studio producing work for the music industry, he left as a founding partner of Studio Output. In addition to his role at the company, Rob has worked as a tutor at Nottingham Trent University, and written articles for the design press.

DCA: What made you start your own design agency?
RC: Dan and I had been working together at another agency for a few years. We had worked our way up to being the senior creative team there, but were frustrated at the lack of input we had to other areas of the business. One of our friends, Ian, was interested in working on the non-design aspects of a studio, so we decided to set up our own partnership. It seemed like a natural progression to run our own thing, and the initial uncertainty we had as businessmen was vastly outweighed by the excitement of suddenly controlling our own destiny.

DCA: Can you outline how you first broke into the graphic and illustration industry?
RC: It was a combination of hard graft and making the most of an opportunity. I came up to Nottingham to study on the graphics degree and, after a few interviews and one rather exploitative placement, I went to see a friend who had a small company designing flyers and sleeves for everyone he knew. The designer there was leaving to go travelling and I was a useful replacement, particularly as I'd blown my student loan on a Mac.

DCA: Is there any specific advice you could give to anyone wanting to break into the graphic design industry?
RC: If you get the chance to work somewhere, take it and make yourself indispensable from the start. Any experience you have is useful, even if you're learning how you'd do things differently. Work with a bit of humility; however good you are, you don't know everything, yet.

DCA: Are there any effective ways you have used to get yourself noticed?
RC: There is a balance between producing something novel and arresting, and producing something gimmicky and irritating. The trick is always to have an angle and carry everything through with a high level of detail. Our first Christmas gift was a Licence to Print Money; complete with security printing, signatures and hand-stamped serial numbers. Last year we gave away Rapping Paper, with the entire lyrics to Kurtis Blow's Christmas Rap transcribed onto it. If there is a level of detail that makes your balls ache when you're doing it, then it will usually impress people that you could be bothered.

DCA: Do you have any tips you can pass on about how a designer can improve their portfolio?
RC: Start with your strongest piece, especially if it's something people might recognise. Think about how people will view the portfolio, and give some thought to the design of the pages. Often a portfolio will be seen when you're not there, so it needs to be able to say what you would say if you were showing it to them. Write notes to explain what they are looking at, and keep it succinct.

The Webdesigner

Ben Logan is the Director of Spotless Design (www.spotlessdesign.com)

Ben Logan is the Director of Spotless Design, which was setup up out of a growing opportunity to help organisations improve the accessibility, and usability of their web presences. Ben previously worked for KPMG as one of the leading web designers in the UK and also did some international work in the United States to implement and write a global accessibility policy for the KPMG practice as part of a Global Branding project.

DCA: How did you break into the industry?
BL: I started my career in a finance company as a trainee accountant. I then moved into a mixed role part IT / part finance for one of the big four accountancy firms. After rapidly losing interest in accountancy I managed to teach myself web design and development. I applied for a job within the organization I was working for and got a job in London. This was definitely the turning point.

DCA: What do you think employers are looking?
BL: I think for a trainee/graduate role employers are looking for is enthusiasm. They can teach them about their organization and cross train them in some skills.

DCA: What is more important; a portfolio or qualifications?
BL: I think certain organizations will always be a "closed shop" where you will need a good 2.1 from a red-brick university, but I think if you have relevant work experience and work your way up you can be serious contender. I never attended university but could prove I could do the work from experience and trying things out in my spare time. A good portfolio will always add weight to your application. You should make certain this is working correctly and up-to-date as it is a statement about who you are and how much you care for the web. Bosses who are hiring are busy people!

DCA: What is the best way for a newcomer to get noticed these days? It seems like a very crowded marketplace at the moment?
BL: I think it's good to look for emerging technologies and focus on that area. Every man and his dog seems to be a web designer, but if you justify and present a good case as to why things should be done in a certain way then you will be worth more than the person who is happy to simply mimic someone's style.

DCA: What advice would you give anyone wanting to break into the industry for the first time?
BL: Get some example sites under your belt, even if it's just for a friend or family member and then highlight how you constructed the site including the highs and lows of the project. I was given some amazing advice by my old boss who told me to network constantly! This could be online, offline or even chatting to family friends for possible openings/projects.

stepping into the big time

The Animator

Darren Garrett, Creative Chief of LittleLoud (www.littleloud.com)

As the Creative Chief of LittleLoud, **Darren Garrett** lists clients as diverse as MTV, Universal Studios and the BBC. The Brighton based digital production company created cutting-edge Flash animations for DVD, broadcast and online distribution.

DCA: Can you outline how you managed to break into the animation industry?
DG: Before setting up LittleLoud I had always worked as a freelancer. I originally got my break by using my drawing skills in making a CD ROM game ten years ago, so it was the creative skills rather than the technical skills that got me work at that point. From there the work just spread out into different areas. But before all of that I had studied Fine Art and Illustration.

DCA: Is there any specific advice you could give to anyone wanting to break into the industry?
DG: It's still strong creative skills that will get you places as far as we are concerned. Try to build a strong diverse portfolio, and think about where you want to position yourself (are you an animator, 3D artist, web designer?).
To a certain extent this is more important than the technical skills, as long as there is potential and willingness to learn. However, it's always good to know the key issues involved in good interactive design (usability, optimisation etc.). Actually though, the most important is enthusiasm and a passion for what you do.

DCA: Are there any original and creative ways you have used to get yourself noticed?
DG: Sometime getting something physical through the post can be eye catching and memorable if done well. It is also worth remembering that you can't really have a substitute for meeting people face to face.

DCA: Do you have any tips you can pass on to the readers of *Digital Creative Arts* about how a designer can improve their portfolio and skillset?
DG: Working on as many diverse projects as possible. Always attempt to learn something new with each job you take on, this is vital and therefore probably is the best and quickest way to build up your skills and portfolio.

as very few companies (if any) can afford to train you, which means your competing for a job against animators with years' of experience and an impressive show reel. Don't try to do Final Fantasy with six of your mates as you will fall well short of the mark and we won't know who did what. Try for something like Luxo Jr. instead. If you want to be an animator then shows us you can animate, we won't be impressed with photorealism if the animation is crap!"

Feeling isolated can also be a major problem when you're trying to get your first break. Cold calling potential employers is still a good idea as it gives you the opportunity to impress them first hand, but you should also investigate getting onto the books of as many agencies that will take you. Agencies tend to specialise in certain fields, so choose yours carefully. The great thing about being on an agency's books is that much of the hard work of finding work will be done for you. These days agencies get their potential clients to take aptitude tests so they can see what level of knowledge they currently have. This enables them to only put you forward for vacancies they think you can fill. This filtering process is being increasingly adopted across the creative industries.

Foot in the door

The creative industries are just like any other. They are looking for people who can not only do the work that is needed, but that are professional in their approach. If you decide to contact companies directly, use an agency, or start your own business, you have to offer the best service you possibly can, no matter what the job is. If you have a website, ensure that it's always up-to-date and that you use an ISP that is geared towards business users. For example, if a client sees your URL but your site is down,

"If there is a level of detail that makes your balls ache ... it will impress people"

The graphics professional

Johnny Cheuk, Graphic Designer and Illustrator (www.acidbird.com)

Born in 1981, **Johnny** describes himself as a graphic designer and illustrator. He grew up in Hong Kong and has had work published in Katalouge, scene360, Smooch Magazine and AFR Boss.

DCA: How did you break into graphic design?
JC: Having graduated from a multi-media course in 2001, I worked in a printing company for a while. I learned essential knowledge of printing in that company, which is very practical and useful in my later graphic design work. Afterward, I worked in several design houses in different fields including magazines, homepages, advertising, etc. In the meantime, I worked as a freelancer. Most jobs that I accepted are helping magazine or homepage to design some illustrations.

DCA: What advice would you give to anyone wanting to work in your industry?
JC: Updating information is very important to a graphic designer. As for myself, I not only keep track with the latest design information, but also in others medias, such as video, movies, music, etc. This would probably arouse ones inspiration, and keep track with the world.

DCA: How have you gotten yourself noticed?
JC: I would say participating in competitions, because it is not only the best way to show your work to others and thus increase your exposure, but also an effective way to advertise yourself to publishers.

DCA: What do you think employers are looking for in the people that they want to hire?
JC: Employers are always looking for creative people – those who think creatively but do not incline to think counter to the main stream. In the illustration/graphic design industry, clients are always the primary concern. I think employers would like to hire those who can strike a balance between creative and commercial.

stepping into the big time

The Film Maker

Mark Pinheiro, Compositor and Tutor, Escape Studios (www.escapestudios.co.uk)

Mark started work in TV making documentaries covering a wide variety of subjects. Several of these attracted Emmy nominations as well as interest from employers. Choosing to work at MTV Mark soon impressed his new employers by winning a prestigious Promax award for a corporate identity design for VH1. With a continuing interest in all aspects of film-making he became interested in Post Production and how it could be used to enhance his creative output.

Mark has subsequently worked at three of the most prolific post production houses in the world and on a range of high profile projects. Mark has worked at Mill Film, Framestore CFC and The Moving Picture Company (MPC) on projects such as 'Black Hawk Down', 'Tomb Raider', 'Harry Potter' (1 and 2), 'Troy' and more recently 'Aliens vs. Predator'.

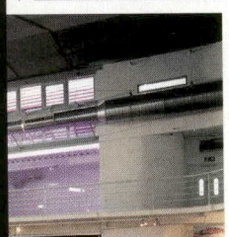
DCA: How did you break into the film industry?
MP: I had a guerrilla film making attitude. It was all about getting as much done as I possibly could to get myself out there and seen. I did all the normal jobs: runner/ tape ops/ junior technician all the time building up experience until I got to the point where it was a viable career.

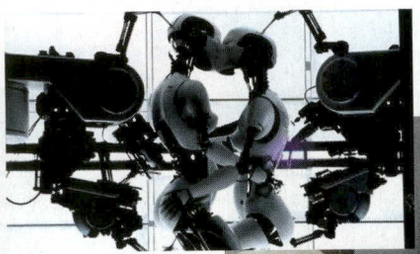
DCA: Is there any specific advice you could give to anyone wanting to break into your industry?
MP: Work hard. It can be a tough industry and you need to graft. Nobody really knows anything – so there is no right or wrong way to do things, but I would recommend that you equip yourself with as much knowledge as possible. The technical skills in compositing that I know have made a massive difference to my career and would recommend anyone to expand their skill set as much as they can.

DCA: The Internet is clearly a key player when you are marketing yourself, but are there any other effective ways you have used to get yourself noticed?
MP: Consistently make material and exhibit it publicly. It's incredibly easy not to do something – not to write or direct or edit or whatever, but the more you do and the more you keep yourself in the public eye the more likely you are for someone to take a chance on you.

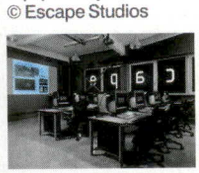
DCA: Do you have any tips you can pass on about how a designer can improve their portfolio?
MP: Well either believe in yourself and plough that furrow or know your market. If you want to be commercial, it's important to stay on top of everything. Know who the competition is, who the employers are and really immerse yourself in the industry.

DCA: In your particular industry, what do you think employers are looking for in the people that they want to hire?
MP: Obedience and flattery. Seriously, they're looking for enthusiasm, practical technical experience and wanting that specific job they're advertising. No one wants to do the crappy jobs, but you have to start somewhere.





above. Glassworks have a long relationship with Bjork. Advanced 3D rendering techniques were used to complete the video for 'All Is Full Of Love'. Alastair Hearsum completed the superb animation for the recent Sprite drink adverts
© Glassworks



below. If you want to get your hands on some state of the art kit, this London based training facility has all the equipment you need.
© Escape Studios

he's just a one click away from checking out another designer.

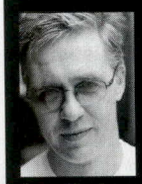
Keep your lines of communication open. Reply promptly to emails and requests for any information. If you're aiming at print media, having some samples you can send out is a great way of showcasing your skills. Brush up on your telephone manner. If you're not comfortable on the phone, take a short course to gain some confidence. Don't kid yourself that you're not selling something, because you are. Cold calling agencies and potential clients is the first thing you should be doing right now.

When the day you have landed an interview with a prospective client finally arrives, bear this advice in mind from Bernadette Sturley of WebPeople Recruitment Specialists (**www.webpeoplejobs.com**) "Definitely be yourself. Preparation is everything. Make sure you've done your research on the company you're going to see, look at their website, research into recent news articles, who are their competitors in the market, what clients do they work for etc. Maybe check out the route to the office the day before so you won't get lost! Always try and be around five or ten minutes early and never be late!"

If you've looked at the professionals in the industry you dream of working in and wondered how on earth they got where they are today, don't forget they too had to start somewhere. If you're going to grow your reputation in your chosen field commit yourself one hundred percent to every job you get. Once you have a few well executed projects under your belt, your future should be assured. With professional tools available all you need to do is add your talent. Stick with it as eventually you'll be noticed. ■

The 3D Designer

Bruce Steele, Director of Visual Effects / Head of Special Projects at Glassworks (www.glassworks.co.uk)



Bruce's background is in 3D computer graphics and programming. He has previously worked for Click 3x in New York, Complete Video and Snapper Films.

DCA: Can you outline how you broke into film making?
BS: I was a musician who bought an Acorn Atom home computer when they were very new, I got into programming and started writing video games for TV quiz shows. With virtually no training or experience of 3D, I convinced Stylus (a company in Cardiff where I was living at the time) to buy me a £120,000 Symbolics System. I taught myself about 3D and the Symbolics System (and Lisp) from the manuals during the six months it took to get the machine. Within the first two weeks of having the machine I delivered three finished 3D jobs - HTV ident, a title sequence for a quiz show and the opening titles for a Tom Jones Special. A year later I did "Walk in a straight line", a commercial for Matt Forrest which won LEAF (Best 3D animation), moved up to London and set up Snapper Bytes with Matt. Fifteen years later I'm still here in Soho.

DCA: Is there any specific advice you could give to anyone wanting to break into the film industry?
BS: Understand the job your going to do, as many students don't realise exactly what their role will be as a 3D animator, some think they'll be designing the character themselves, some even think they'll be making up whole scenes, sets and storylines! Your student showreel is probably the last time you'll ever have that sort of freedom, in the real world many things will be decided before you get involved, possibly everything.

DCA: The Internet is clearly a key player when you are marketing yourself, but are there any other effective ways you have used to get yourself noticed?
BS: Twenty seconds of excellent animation on your showreel - that'll get you a job. There are lots of things you might do to get attention but none will get you a job if your work's not up to scratch. Don't show loads of mediocre stuff - less is more! You've got maybe 30 seconds to impress - and you can't presume that someone will even look at your CV or anything else unless you showreel is good. Find out who your showreel should be sent to (usually the recruitment department) and send it to them. You may think it's a good idea sending it to me or Alastair Hearsum - but that simply means we have to deliver it to the correct department for you - and it might get lost in the process.

DCA: Do you have any tips you can pass on about how a designer can improve their portfolio?
BS: Your showreel should demonstrate what you can do - if you're a great character animator show us - if you're great at making things look real then make sure your showreel reflects that. Many showreels have the same thing; a mediocre walk cycle, a run or a trip, a character carrying something heavy - all really basic stuff that I'd expect everyone to be able to do in their first year. Unless that stuff is outstandingly good it won't make you stick out from the crowd. Watch "The Roadrunner" or "Tom and Jerry" (or any Pixar film) for inspiration - animation is the art of bringing something to life - 10 seconds of a believable character is worth much more than 10 minutes of average walk cycles!

DCA: Do you think that formal training is very important?
BS: I personally got hold of the manuals and taught myself. In the end it's what you can do that counts - not how you learned it. Companies like Escape are good because of their industry connections, so you spend time learning the things that count. To be honest I sometimes wonder what on earth some people have been doing for three years!

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music!
LISTEN

Wired for sound

The use of sound in your creative projects can add dynamism, reinforce brand values and more. Karl Foster explains what you need to get wired

Intro themes, backing tracks and special effects are staples of movie soundtracks and without them, productions for the silver screen would fall flat. Many a high-powered presentation features an intro of slick graphics accompanied by music to add drama to the occasion. And numerous software packages have sound effects to accompany button clicks, task completion and the like.

Not only does audio entertain and engage, it also has the ability to inform an audience. Whether putting together a slideshow or show reel of a portfolio or, for the adventurous Web Weaver, designing a multimedia site, audio is a must-have tool for the digital creative in any field. Luckily in this digital age, it's never been easier to author pro-sounding audio on computer at home - no studio time required. So whether you need a few pings and bleeps for effect, a voice-over for a DVD production, or plan on creating original music, you probably already have almost all of the gear needed to make some noise. In this article, we'll explain what else is necessary to get started, but first, let's examine what digital audio actually is.

Make some noise

The first mass consumer uptake of digital audio was in the early 1980s. CD players arrived on the shelves and gradually, analogue vinyl records made way for shiny silver discs. CDs incorporate 'dits' of encoded sound. CD players convert laser light reflected off the dits into the 1s and 0s of digital and then into an electrical signal that can be amplified and fed to the speakers - it's called digital-to-analogue (DA) conversion. To get the data onto the disc in the first place, analogue sound is sampled at 441,000 times a second (44.1kHz), which is fast enough to fool the ear into thinking it is receiving continuous sound and not a series of slices. The level of loudness, or amplitude, per sample also has a bearing for CD audio. Measured in 'bits', a res of 16 bits provides accurate results for most ears.

When it comes to computers, the same 1s and 0s can be stored on a hard drive using an analogue-to-digital (AD) converter, or generated in software and then converted via an audio interface back to analogue and fed into an amplifier. Sound reproduction, a real-time process, requires a fairly powerful machine - lots of RAM, a fast processor and fast, capacious hard drives. For the best results, a dedicated audio interface is a must. Such devices are available in many forms, including PCI cards with on-board audio sockets, PCI cards with break-out boxes (a separate box featuring audio sockets that connect to the card via a multi-core cable), along with USB and FireWire-connected audio interfaces, some with built-in mixing desks or built-in musical keyboards. Enabling sound to be fed into and out of a computer, converting audio between digital and analogue at speeds of up to 192kHz with a res of up to 32 bits, which is very high quality.

A sound record

For voice-overs and capturing live instrumental performances, you'll need a microphone and by far the best type is a condenser. It requires a 48V power source (called 'phantom power') to charge a highly sensitive diaphragm which picks up sound.

The sound quality of a condenser microphone is incredible and they're not too expensive either these days. However, if you opt for this microphone type, ensure your audio interface supports phantom power.

"It's never been easier... no studio time required"

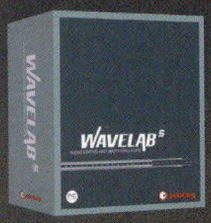
Naturally, you'll need some means of monitoring the sound both while it's being recorded and for playback. For the former, a good pair of closed headphones sporting padding around the earpieces to stop sound leaking back into the mic is ideal. For playback, a pair of near-field reference monitors, shielded so they don't pick up interference from the computer, are a far better bet than those little multimedia speakers that so many PCs are shipped with (see the 'Reference monitors' panel). So that's input and output taken care of. Next, you'll need audio recording and editing software to capture and manipulate what you record. There are dedicated packages, such as Steinberg's WaveLab (PC) and Bias' Peak (Mac) that enable you to render what's captured via the microphone into WAV (PC) or AIFF (Mac) audio files at various sample rates and bit depths. Bear in mind that the higher the quality of the recording, the larger the file will be. Each package has tools with which you can edit recorded material, optimising volume, chopping out unwanted bits, speeding it up, slowing it down, and even adding special effects. The recording can >>>

Reference monitors

Whether engaged in recording voice-overs, creating a sound montage or whipping up a symphony, you need decent reference monitors to check what you've recorded - multimedia speakers or the hi-fi will not do. Studio-style monitors are designed to have a relatively flat and wide frequency response so that they don't colour the sound and you can hear the full frequency spectrum. Of course, you never know what your audio is likely to be played back on, but ensure that it's as good as possible at the mixing stage.

A pair of high-quality, magnetically-shielded audio monitors, such as these 130Watt M-Audio BX8a beauties, will do your productions justice

wired for sound



Steinberg's WaveLab offers all the tools you need to record audio, effectively process it and author CD audio compilations
www.steinberg.net

Mac owners can take advantage of Bias' mighty Peak audio-editing suite when recording and manipulating sound
www.bias-inc.com

Audio editing

If you're planning to get serious about recording your own audio, editing pre-existing files and authoring CDs, a dedicated editing package is an essential investment. Such software offers the means not only to record, but to manipulate sound as if it were plasticine. With a file loaded, you can shift its pitch without altering the length, alter the length without altering pitch (both very handy for dropping an out-of-time or out-of-pitch sample into a composition), add all manner of effects, remove any unwanted frequencies (such as mains hum) and an awful lot more.

>>> then be imported into whichever program you're using to arrange the visuals (see 'Audio editing' for more).

The sound of music

If you want to create original music, an audio and MIDI sequencing package is a must. MIDI stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface and it's the protocol by which MIDI-equipped devices communicate. Being digital code, a MIDI signal can be recorded to your hard drive and played back to control a music synthesizer, mixing desk or other device. An audio/MIDI sequencer enables you to record and edit both data types, so you could trigger a virtual drum machine, bassline, keyboard part and orchestral instruments via MIDI and import real-world digital audio and material ripped from CD so that it runs in synchronisation with the virtual backing outfit. Sequencers also offer the means to add effects to anything that's being played, making it possible to simulate a concert hall environment (reverb), the acoustics of a canyon (echo), fatten up instruments (chorus) and tame wild variations in the dynamics of a performance (compression). Sequencers such as Steinberg's Cubase SX, Apple's Logic Audio (Mac only), Sony's Acid Pro and Cakewalk's Sonar (both PC only) all have in-built, virtual effects, as well as the virtual instruments you'll need to for a musical ensemble.

There are hundreds of software-based instruments that plug into a sequencing environment, ready for triggering either from the musical keyboard of an audio interface or the sequencer's MIDI tracks. Many are emulations of old, physical synthesizers, while some aim to emulate real instruments. Others enable you to record snippets of audio, called 'samples' and play them back at different pitches and with different tonal characteristics. There's also the 'soft studio' which is a collection of virtual instruments with a rudimentary sequencer. A notable example of this approach is Propellerheads' Reason, which has sample-based and software-driven modules capable of producing incredible timbres. It can also be synchronised with Cubase via a technology called ReWire for yet more sonic possibilities.

Super sonic tracks

Investing in sample CDs and DVDs will expand your sound palette. These are collections of high-quality percussion loops, musical phrases, instrumental one-shots, voices, and special effects which can be loaded into a sampler and triggered via MIDI. Libraries like East West, e-Lab and Zero-G have many titles (www.timespace.com).

Simple voice-over material doesn't really provoke too much head-scratching. It's just a case of setting the correct volume level for the mic, donning headphones, clicking on the record button and off you go. Creating a montage of sound or cooking up a musical composition is more challenging, or very much more challenging if you're stuck for a tune. If you do have a musical idea, the first thing is to decide a tempo and enter it into the sequencer's tempo track. You may wish to start with a percussion track, which can be entered with the mouse into the drum editor, or tapped in on a MIDI keyboard. The sequencer's click track can be switched on to help you keep time.

Cubase: Steinberg's Cubase SX, for Apple Mac and PC operating systems, can handle audio and MIDI sequencing and even offers an impressive extra feature of surround-sound mixdown for DVD soundtracks

logic. Apple's Logic Pro is the sequencer of choice for many Mac owners seeking the stunning sounds of its many virtual instruments. However, priced at just a shade short of £600, it's not the most affordable package on offer.

Reason Reason 3.0 (**www.propellerheads.se**) is the number one soft studio. You can place as many instruments and other devices into its rack as your computer can stand and even hook it up to Cubase SX

Sonar. Offering a full spectrum of creative technologies, Cakewalk's Sonar 5 Producer Edition (**www.cakewalk.com**) is a PC-exclusive sequencing suite with extensive audio editing and mixing facilities

A world of possibilities

While the technology discussed across these pages will be well known to the music-recording enthusiast, creatives in other spheres would do well to become acquainted with it.

Graphics or photography portfolio slideshows benefit from audio accompaniment, such as a voice-over explaining each composition, or some inspiring music to suit the nature of the visuals.

Those engaged in 2D or 3D animation, or digital video manipulation, will surely appreciate the possibility of adding effects and music to a show reel.

The huge uptake of broadband, meanwhile, makes delivering audio content along with Web pages much more feasible than in the days of dial-up access.

Composing software

The majority of quality sequencing packages these days enable you to manipulate both audio and MIDI data within one convenient package.

These are distinct from one another in that the former is actual sound while the latter is a bunch of instructions telling a MIDI device what to do, such as play an A minor chord for three beats and then bend it up six octaves. While sequencers' audio-manipulation capabilities are not on a par with those of a dedicated package, they make the manipulation of MIDI a breeze. For many digital professionals, whose main line of work does not directly relate to the music world, sequencers are the ideal option for creating simple tracks to accompany visual artwork or media.

Performances can be tweaked to perfection using this technology, or users could even devise sequences that no human could possibly play outside of the artificial digital realm.

Name that tune

A melody line comes next and often a composer will load a virtual instrument, assign it to a MIDI track and play in the MIDI data via a keyboard. The sequencer records the data and instantly forwards it to the instrument. The tempo can be slowed down so you can keep up, or notes can be entered into the grid editor with the mouse. Once recorded, the MIDI data is fully editable and can be played back at any sane tempo.

Everyone has a different way of working. Some may opt to get the vocal down early, others may continue to add virtual instruments, while others will start dropping in samples, stretching them to fit and pitch-shifting them so that they're in tune. What is typical, however, is that only the drumkit is in stereo, with cymbals and toms arranged from left to right and with the kick drum and snare in the middle. Other instruments are monophonic and are arranged across the stereo spread so that they don't get in each other's way. For example, you may have the bass panned partially left and the piano (the lower notes of which would clash with the bass) panned partially right. If two instruments do clash and you can't find room in the stereo spread to accommodate them, the sequencer's mixer has tone controls by which they can be equalised so that their frequencies don't interfere.

Once everything is recorded and edited to perfection, and with each track's audio level, EQ and effects settings established, mixing down is just a case of exporting the whole piece to a stereo audio file.

When it comes to outputting, your completed track could then be converted to an MP3 for download or streaming from a website, burnt to disc as CD audio or used in a presentation - as with many of the fruits of the digital age, it's completely up to you.

In future issues, we'll be looking in more depth at the ins and outs of audio manipulation and music creation, examining the technology and techniques used by masters of multimedia. In the meantime, just imagine how your visuals could benefit from a little aural stimulation. ■

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Generation i

Wonder what the future will bring to die hard digital creatives? KARL FOSTER looks into his Liquid Crystal Display to discover the technologies you'll be using in future

Technology waits for no man. A shiny new computer system is no sooner bought than superseded by a superior offering. Then again, any worthy computer launched in the last five years is more than capable of providing the power needed to construct incredible creative works and will happily jack into an ever more networked world. While it's difficult to predict with accuracy what hardware developments lie ahead for the digital creative, we've examined the current state-of-the-art and talked to the professionals to make some educated guesses about what lies around the corner.

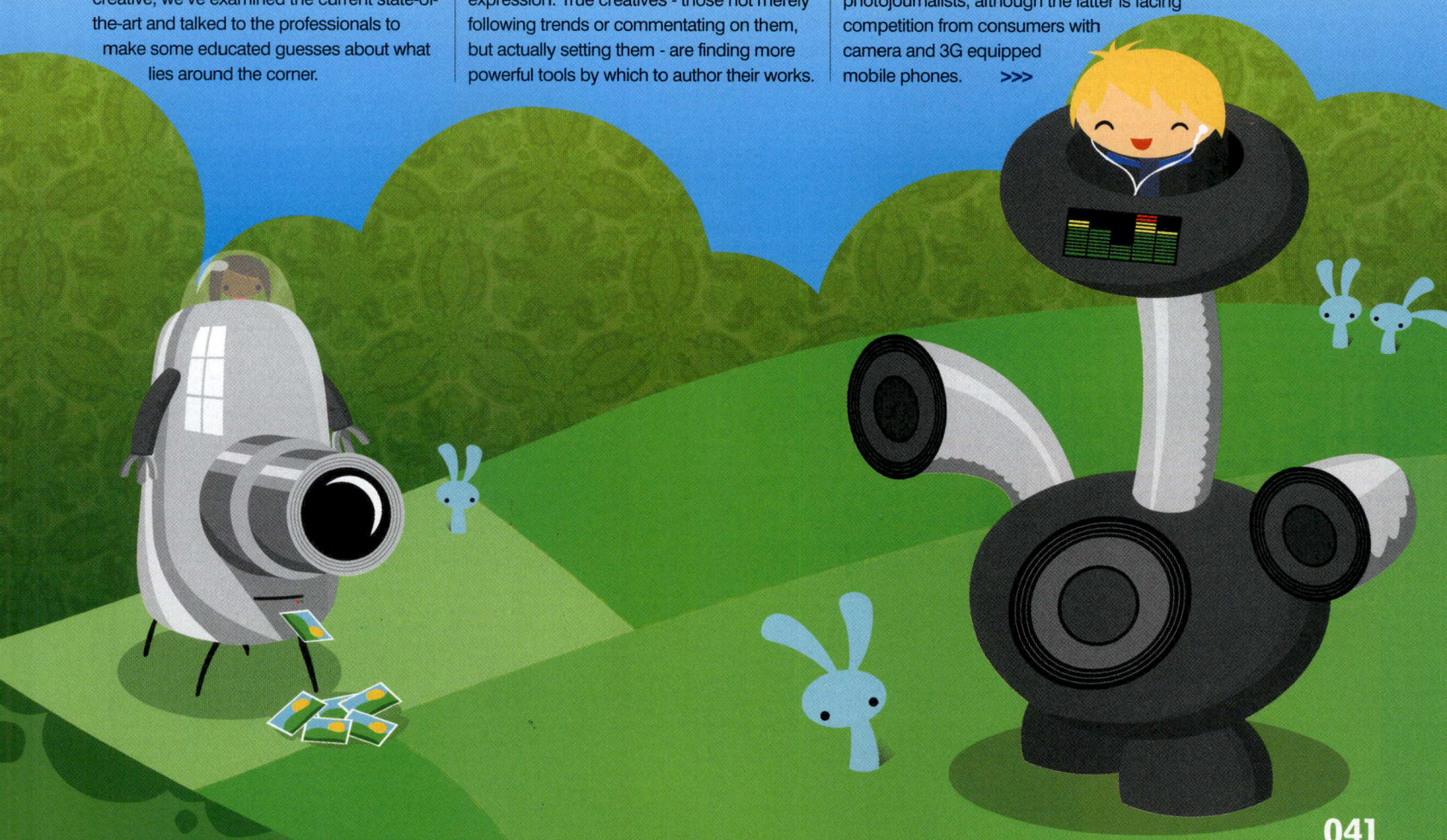
Generation i

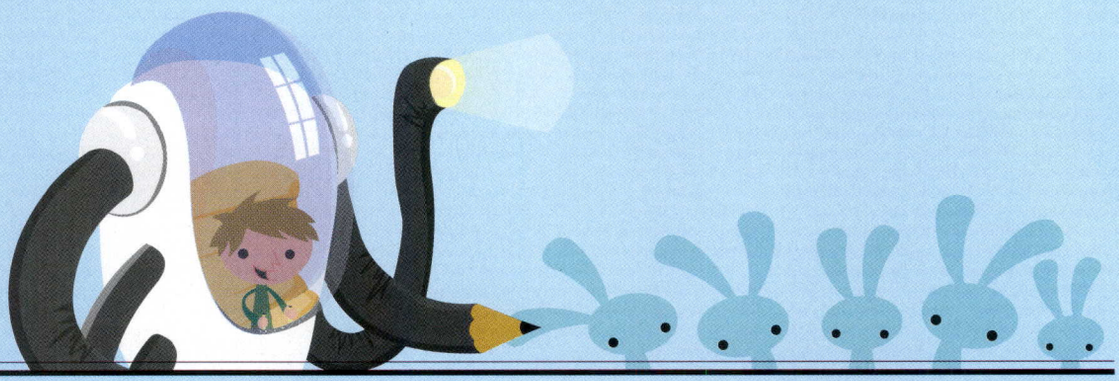
The 'interactive generation', reckoned to be those born after 1984 is maturing into a world of computers, networks, mobile phones and digital media. It's a consumptive collective that gobbles up new technology without a second thought and often uses it in ways never imagined by the inventors. From blogs and podcasts to texting and happy slapping, Generation i consumers are finding ever more inventive, sometimes stupid and irrelevant, ways to use technology for self expression. True creatives - those not merely following trends or commentating on them, but actually setting them - are finding more powerful tools by which to author their works.

Photographers and videographers have, in the main, seized on the advantages of digital capture and file manipulation, producing material that would be impossible if using film.

Camera resolution is ever on the up and in terms of stills capture, it's not unusual to find the serious photographer wielding a DSLR with a sensor rated at more than 8-megapixels. This not only challenges 35mm film in terms of resolution, it yields images with a greater dynamic range than film, hence there's more scope for contrast adjustment. The files are quick to load into an image-editing program and it's quicker than ever to send them to the client via a high-bandwidth Internet connection.

It's made a huge difference to sports photographers and photojournalists, although the latter is facing competition from consumers with camera and 3G equipped mobile phones. >>>



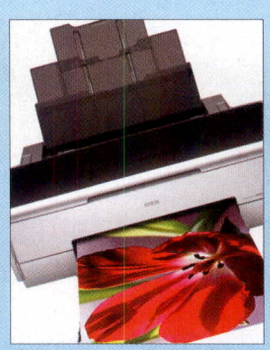


>>> The big complaint from pro photographers is that they're spending more and more time in front of the computer, rather than heading for the pub as the lab develops their film, but the technology has made the reporting of events more immediate and expanded creative possibilities. While image-sensor resolution climbs, advances in CMOS technology is driving down prices and power requirements. Coupled with developments in fuel-cell technology and lens manufacture, it'll not be long before we see DSLRs challenging film-based medium-format cameras on image quality and operating longevity in the photography field. The current 'big chip' is Kodak's world-beating 39 megapixel sensor, way ahead of 35mm film res, while Canon's Diffractive Optics and Olympus' Four Thirds system represent key advances in optics, making for smaller lenses with less distortion, hence the glass is keeping pace with image sensors.

The current buzz-abbreviation in the video world is HDV, or high-definition video, which takes the resolution of a frame to a maximum 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, up from 720 x 480 pixels for NTSC video systems. The frame rate is also higher, hence larger, faster storage solutions and more powerful processors are needed when editing such footage. Add in high-quality audio, which these days can be captured at up to 192kHz (more than four times the sample rate of CD audio) at 32-bit resolution and in 10.1 surround, and you're looking at immense amounts of data. At present, 64-bit computing environments, capable of addressing far more RAM than the 4GB limit of 32-bit, are at an early stage of development. Mac OS X is available, as is Windows XP Professional x64 Edition, this latter supporting 128GB of RAM and 16TB of virtual memory, and both supporting dual processors. Native 64-bit applications are slowly rolling out and all we need now are motherboards capable of accommodating the extra RAM modules. They will no doubt come in time.

LaCie monitors are popular among professionals and the 321 has a super-large 20.1-inch viewing area. It can also be mounted - www.lacie.com/uk

Get access to the right-click joy of OS X with a Mighty Mouse. That scroll wheel goes up, down, sideways and diagonally - www.apple.com/uk

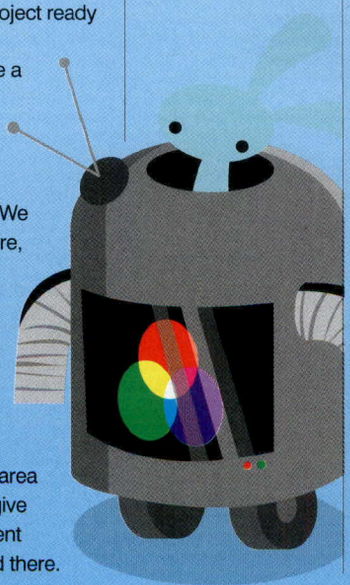


The Epson Photo Stylus R2400 is finding favour among photographers and designers thanks to its eight-ink system - www.epson.co.uk

The Phase One P45 digital back, clipped onto a compatible medium-format camera, offers a capture res of 39-megapixels - www.phaseone.com

The concerns of the 3D modeller and animator are similar to those of the videographer, although yet more power is needed. Currently, the 3D animations we see in silver-screen blockbusters such as the recent Star Wars films, Lord of the Rings and the like, are generated on render farms - a bunch of networked computers, each machine dedicated to rendering a single frame, then firing it back to the project ready to start on another frame. A 90 minute, CG-heavy film would take a lifetime to render on one modern computer, but as power increases, costs go down, render time becomes shorter and 3D models improve. We already see reasonably realistic fire, smoke, water, reflectivity and radiosity in today's movie productions and the door is open for the inclusion of even more processor-hungry elements, the most complex being the virtual lead actor.

Display technology is another area ripe for improvement. LCDs will give way to thinner, more power-efficient OLED displays, but it doesn't end there. German manufacturer Siemens is aiming to bring paper-thin displays to market by 2007. They can be bound into books, pasted into magazines, wrapped round lampposts and would certainly make a difference to the look of a designer's portfolio. Rather than leafing through each example of work, a single sheet could present the whole portfolio sequentially. It would also make for incredible rolling exhibitions and pervasive advertising.



As for hardcopy output, multiple ink tanks, such as three shades of black and two each of magenta, cyan and yellow, is the way forward and many manufacturers are already producing eight-colour inkjets. The main concern in this area is the longevity of archival prints. Canon and Fuji already have paper/ink combinations that are claimed to be good for 100 years if the prints are properly stored and this figure may increase as the materials improve. It's hard to see what else printer manufacturers will come up with, considering the current quality of output available, but it's certain they'll come up with something in the near future.

Much of the above is a little way off, so what hardware is available right now with which we could construct a dream set-up for the digital creative? Here's what...

Cutting-edge kit

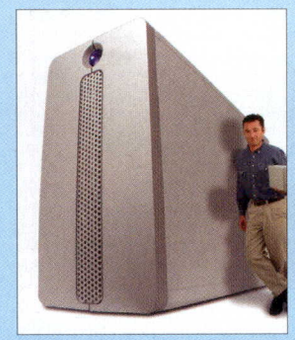
At the heart of many creative computer set-ups is the Apple Power Mac G5 Quad and G5 Dual, running Mac OS X Tiger and capable of supporting up to 8GB of RAM. It's possible to install up to four graphics cards in

Very broadband

In what seems like a very short time indeed, domestic internet access has gone from 56Kbps via dial-up to always-on 8Mbps, from a good many ISPs, via the same phone line. Fast internet access is vital for the creative, whether surfing for resources or delivering high-res artwork in a hurry. As optical cables replace copper, how long before we see Gigabit network speeds?

Fuel cells

Canon recently demonstrated a hydrogen-based fuel cell that'll power a digital camera and aims to have such cells to market within three years. No more camera and laptop batteries going 'phut' at a crucial creative moment. Just bang in a spare cell and re-charge the dead one with the Universe's most abundant element. The only by-product is water vapour.



LaCie's Biggest Disk Extreme can be configured to support a whopping 2TB of data and connects via a super-fast FireWire 800 port - www.lacie.com/uk

The latest video revolution is high-definition (HDV). Capable cameras include Sony HDR-FX1 offer a vertical image resof 1080 lines. Check out www.sony.co.uk

MOTU's 896HD audio interface has multiple inputs and outputs and can render digital audio at up to 192kHz at 24-bit. Have a look at the specs on- www.motu.com

order to run eight displays and the ultimate card is the Nvidia Quadro FX 4500 which is excellent for advanced design and video applications. For PC devotees, possibly the most powerful consumer computers currently available are made by Alienware, which has a range of models toting both single, dual-core and dual processors. For digital imaging applications, the Area-51 and Aurora models are highly recommended and feature the beautiful Predator case design. Alienware PCs are available with AMD Athlon 64, Intel Xeon or Intel Pentium processors, can be configured with up to 4GB of RAM, there's the option to have an Nvidia GeForce 7800 GTX graphics card with 256GB of on-board memory and two internal 500GB hard drives. Whichever computer you go for, make sure it has a dual-head graphics card by which to connect a secondary monitor, and that it has the maximum amount of RAM that the motherboard can support.

Those dedicated to mouse input will doubtlessly have a dual-button mouse with scroll wheel, while others may opt for the more natural input method of a graphics tablet, such as the Wacom Intuos, which is now available in widescreen format to match the aspect ratio of Apple Cinema displays. Many bureaux, however, favour LaCie LCD monitors, the top-of-the-line currently being the 21.3-inch 321 with a maximum resolution of 1,600 x 1,200 pixels. Monitor calibration, to ensure consistency of colour, would be down to a LaCie blue eye.

Well-heeled digital photographers seeking the ultimate in image quality will have ditched their DSLRs in favour of digital backs, such as the 39-megapixel Phase One P45 capable of outputting file sizes of 117MB, while videographers will be looking for HDV capture with a triple-CCD camera such as the Sony HDR-FX1, short of going for a full-blown broadcast-quality device. Scanning existing hardcopy requires a high-quality scanner and you can't get much better than the Imacon Flextight 949 with its optical resolution of up to 8,000 dpi and which can handle both printed material and transparencies. Audio capture, for those engaged in music or soundtrack production, will be via a high-quality interface such as the MOTU 896HD which supports 192kHz digital audio.

If seeking to print at up to A3+, you could do worse than an Epson Photo Stylus R2400 which uses eight inks to produce prints of incredible quality. Back in the digital realm, meanwhile, a lot of storage space is going to be needed. Having maxed out the computer's internal hard drive bays with the biggest, fastest hard drives available, it's time to attach a large-capacity external drive to the computer's USB 2.0, FireWire 400 or 800 port. The LaCie Bigger Disk Extreme is a good choice and is available in capacities of up to 2TB.

Additional items, such as a MIDI input keyboard, audio monitors, microphones, a secondary display monitor, uninterrupted power supply, ADSL router for Internet connection and a 100Mbit Ethernet card for networking are optional, but are all very desirable.

The future - now!

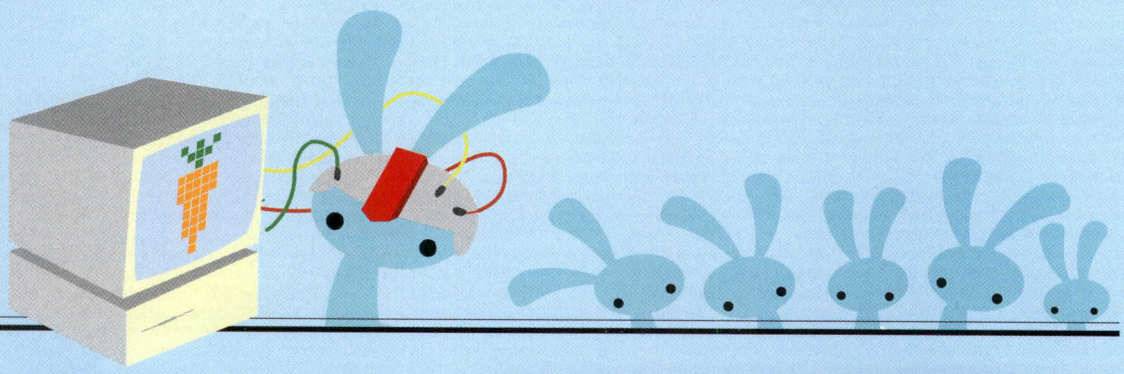
Keeping up with technological trends is a breeze if you've got an internet connection. For the relatively non-technical, the technology section of BBC News (http://news.bbc.co.uk) is a great resource. Apple is always quick to update its website with news of new products and upgrades for Mac users (www.apple.com/hotnews) and both sites offer an RSS news feed that can be read with the appropriate reader. Other excellent sources are the tech news sections of CNN (www.cnn.com), ZDNet (http://news.zdnet.com) and Toms Hardware Guide (www.tomshardware.com). In order to keep your gear current, ensure to check the websites of the software and hardware vendors from which you bought the kit in order to find out about driver, firmware and software updates, and Windows XP users should regularly log on to Windows Update to see which critical security patches are required on any given day.

Soup-up your system

If you're not in the market for a load of new creative computing equipment, there are some tweaks you can make to an existing set-up in order to eke more performance from it. If the motherboard is not already equipped with the fastest processor it can support, then get the fastest processor and install it. Also, install the maximum amount of RAM it can take - the more memory, the better when running OS X or Windows XP. Switch off any fancy interface gadgets, such as Mac OS X's animated dock (Apple > Dock > Dock Preferences) and Windows XP's fancy themes (Start > Control Panel > System > Advanced > Performance Settings > Adjust for best performance).

Disable all unnecessary background programs that may launch when the computer is >>>

"Well-heeled digital photographers will have ditched their DSLRs in favour of digital backs"



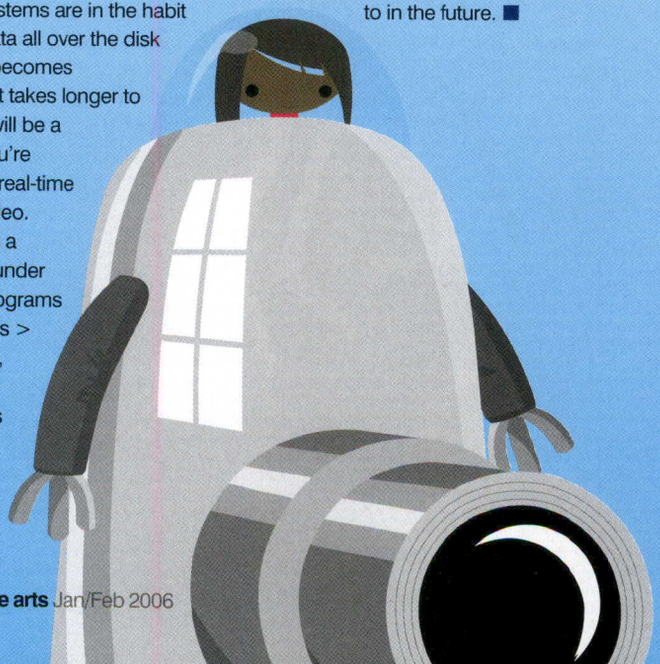
"your computer gets in the habit of slinging files anywhere"

>>> switched on, such as Microsoft's pesky Office indexing service, QuickTime, anything by Real Audio and, if you don't need an Internet connection, unload networking, the real-time virus checker and the firewall. Also, disable any service that regularly checks for updates to the OS or other applications that reside on your machine. In Windows, you can check background processes by pressing 'Ctrl', 'Alt'&'Delete' and clicking the Processes tab, while for Mac OS X go to Applications > Utilities >Activity Monitor. Be wary of which processes you shut down, however. The system needs some of them to keep on running, so only end those that you're confident you don't need. It also helps to set Windows' paging file to 1.5 times the amount of RAM installed in the machine, rather than having a dynamic paging file. While you're in Performance Options switching off the visual effects, click on the Advanced tab and then Change to access Custom Size. If you have 1GB of RAM, set the minimum and maximum values to 1,500MB.

Disk performance can be improved by regularly running defragmentation software to ensure all the files are contiguous. Operating systems are in the habit of slinging data all over the disk and when it becomes fragmented, it takes longer to read, which will be a problem if you're working with real-time audio and video. Windows has a defrag utility under Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools, while Norton SystemWorks (**www.symantec.com**) for Mac incorporates a disk maintenance utility. Also, if your PC's hard drives are still using FAT32 and you're running Windows XP, convert them to NTFS.

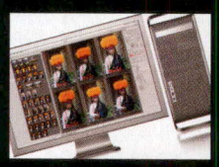
Photoshop can use scratch disk space as virtual memory, so if you have a third drive that does not contain the image that's being worked on (and is not the system drive), assign it as a scratch disk in Photoshop's general preferences. It also helps to keep files that are to be edited off the system drive, no matter what application you're using. Finally, if the machine does start behaving sluggishly, try switching it off and switching it back on again. When opening multiple programs, some of them don't unload completely when you quit, leaving resource-hogging components still resident in RAM. To reboot would be like flushing them down the digital dunnie.

There are many more performance tweaks that are possible, some of which are potential system breakers and best left to experts. If you find that the selection given above doesn't give the you extra power that you really need, then at least you now know, by reading this article, where more power can be bought and what there is to look forward to in the future. ■



Your creative set-up - 2010

Some of the technologies that could see your system transform from sluggish to spectacular within the next five years



Computer

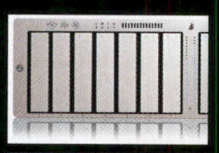
The Mac G5 already uses dual processors and a 64-bit operating system, but we're still waiting for creative applications that can take full advantage of the technology - www.apple.com/uk

In the future, it's highly likely you'll be using a computer with more than one processor and that the operating system and software will use a 64-bit environment or higher. That means the system can use much more memory than a 32-bit OS and the processor can handle more bits per operation. The Mac G5 and OS X are already there, as is AMD's Athlon 64 plus Windows XP x64 Edition. Sadly, the software that can take advantage of all this power is emerging rather slowly.

Monitor

Samsung's 40-inch OLED display features a resolution of 1,280 x 800 pixels. Such technology could see off the LCD monitor in similar fashion to the demise of the CRT monitor - www.samsung.co.uk

You may enjoy the clarity, reliability and image quality of an LCD monitor already, but analysts predict that before the end of this decade, OLEDs will account for $3billion of the display market. The Organic Light-Emitting Diode display is a sandwich of organic material between electric connectors and, when a charge is applied, it glows, obviating the need for a backlight. This makes for thinner, lighter displays that use less power than LCDs.



Storage

A RAID, such as Apples Xserve, offers TeraBytes of storage in configurations designed for performance or data integrity - rather better than relying on a single hard drive - www.apple.com/uk

A Toshiba HD DVD player and a disc capable of storing 30GB of data on one side, but how long before it's overhauled by holographic DVDs? www.toshiba.co.uk

The Redundant Array of Inexpensive (or Independent) Disks (RAID) concept is not new, but falling prices are making it more affordable for serious creatives. In essence, it's a load of hard drives with data spread across them, either for a performance boost or to protect data should one drive fail. Optical storage, meanwhile, sees the competing formats of HD DVD and Blu-Ray, both with much higher capacities than DVD+RW. However, Optoware (www.optoware.co.jp) has devised a holographic technology that accommodates 1TB of data on one disc.

Input

The Wacom Cintiq 21UX is an excellent input device, enabling you to draw directly onto the screen rather than onto a separate tablet - www.wacom-europe.com

The mouse is not an option for many artists and designers, and even a graphics tablet can cause hand-to-eye co-ordination problems for some. It's already possible to draw directly onto the screen with the Wacom Cintiq range of monitors/tablets. It's quite possible that lighter, more power-efficient OLED screens will emerge making such devices much more wieldy.

Capture

Currently the DSLR with the highest resolution count on the market, the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark II boasts a capture resolution of 16.7 megapixels (www.canon.co.uk)

The megapixel counts of digital cameras are on an inexorable rise, with five megapixels being the most commonly sold these days. It's inevitable, however, that they'll go higher. Kodak has just announced the world's first 39-megapixel sensor, designed for use in Phase One's medium-format digital backs, and the technology will doubtless trickle down. What we'll do when the resolution of the chip exceeds the resolving power of the lens is anyone's guess, but you may need to invest in a new, high-definition lens system before too long.

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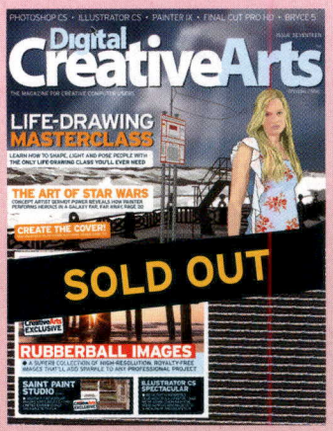

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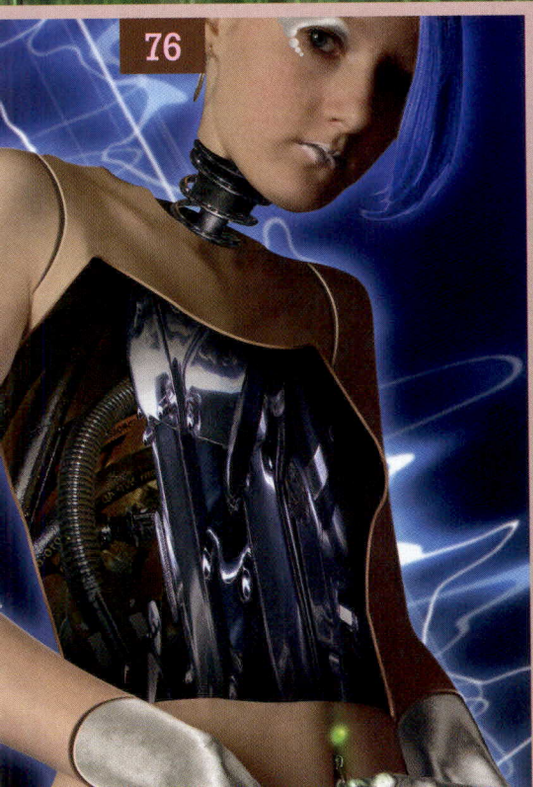
Final Cut Pro: Apple bundles a compression application with Final Cut Pro and DVD Studio Pro, aptly named Compressor. With version 2, the application has been completely revamped. This tutorial will introduce you to its workings

76 Rise of the machines
Photoshop: In the tradition of great robot fantasy, this issue we're creating our own sexy cyber android using Photoshop CS2. This is truly an exercise in using Photoshop to create the kind of seamless, hyper-real composite image for that the software itself was originally developed



Photoshop vs. Painter

Sam Gilbey shows you how to create an extraordinary fantasy vision by mixing digital media and harnessing the creativity of two of the most powerful applications to grace the creative world

THE ARTIST

Sam Gilbey: Sam's illustrations have appeared in numerous publications, both on and offline, all over the globe. His observational, colourful and distinct style often draws upon and celebrates popular culture. He is also a Senior Editor of popular arts and design news portal, Pixelsurgeon. More of his work can be found at **www.sam-gilbey.com**

On the CD: Panda_girl_final.tif, Sketch.jpg

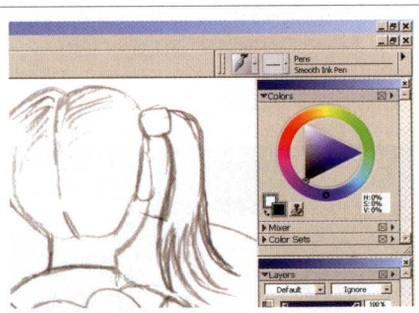
As a designer or illustrator, it's more than likely that you'll favour one software package over all others, and remain loyal to it. If your package of choice is giving you the effect that you want of course, then there's no problem with working in this way, but it's always worth exploring the possibilities that other packages offer. Sometimes, the best results are achieved by combining the strengths of two (or more) pieces of software, and this is exactly what we are going to explore in this tutorial. Every program offers its own unique angle to explore, and it's always worth experimenting in order to develop your style and skills further.

We asked Sam Gilbey to produce an illustration demonstrating the techniques he favours, and for this particular artist, a combination of Painter and Photoshop is a natural choice. Once he's planned the composition with a sketch or two, he starts in Painter, concentrating on hand-drawn elements and using a variety of brushes for different areas of the image. Then he completes his pieces in Photoshop, where effects and colours can be applied, which inject an extra level of vitality.

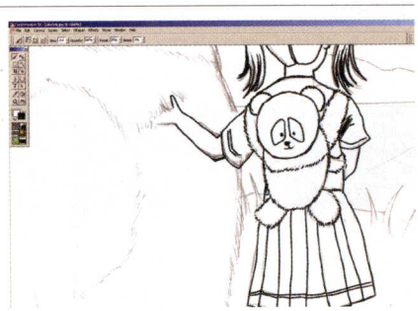
To demonstrate how this process works for him, Sam has designed a piece that allows for a broad range of techniques from both packages to be utilised. If you're familiar with any of the animated movies of Hayao Miyazaki/Studio Ghibli, such as *Spirited Away*, or Kiki's *Delivery Service*, you may well recognise the style of work created across these pages. Movie buffs will also know that the main protagonist is often a young girl or boy, who takes off on an exciting, mystical adventure. In this piece our heroine is joined by an unusual and unusually large companion, and as she reaches the brow of a hill overlooking her new town, she's greeted by an exciting firework display. What exciting events are to come?

As a final point, we recommend that you use some kind of tablet and pen to keep your digital brush strokes free and natural. The Wacom Intuous series is particularly good for this type of work.

01 SKETCHY DETAILS: Open your copy of Painter (or the trial version from the CD) and open 'sketch.jpg' from the disc. Open the Color Mixer, Tools and Layers palettes, which are selectable from the Window menu. Click on the arrow and create a new layer at the top right of the Layers palette. Select the brush from the top left of the Tools palette.



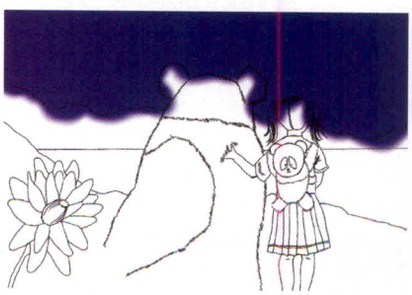
02 CHOOSE THE RIGHT BRUSH: From the Property bar at the top right of the interface, you need to choose a brush category and an individual brush variant. Select Pens from the first drop-down menu, and from the second, select the Smooth ink pen. Towards the left of the Property bar, set the size to 2, and the Opacity to 100%.



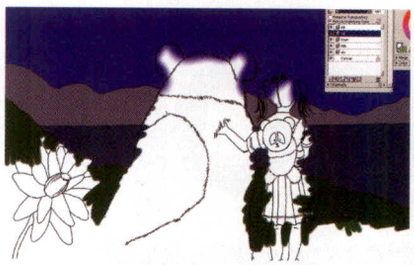
03 THE FIRST MARKS: At the bottom left of the image window you'll see a magnifying glass. To the right of the slider change the percentage to 100%. Now, click on the pair of binoculars, and drag the red border so that you're focused on the girl. Click away from the red rectangle, and start to make your first black outlines around the figure. »»

04 COMPLETING THE OUTLINE: When it comes to the panda, don't draw the outline as a single, solid stroke. Rather make lots of small marks to give the impression of furry edges. There's no need to draw in the individual blades of grass though, as we'll paint these in later. Just follow the basic contour of the terrain to create a basic outline.

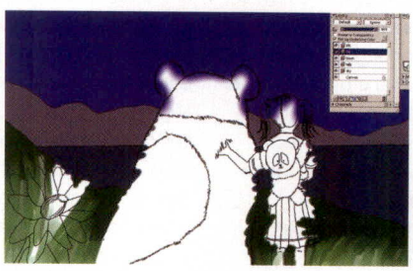
05 MAKING THAT SAVE: Before you move on, save the Painter file (.RIF format) to your own machine. Go to the bottom layer and choose Select > All, and delete the sketch from the layer. You should now be left with a nice clean digital ink drawing from which you can start building up your illustration.



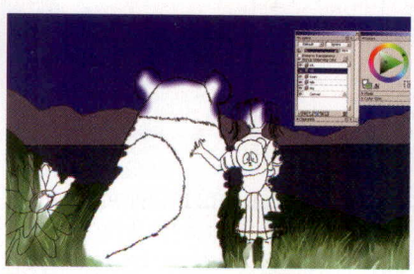
06 UNDER A FLAT BLUE SKY: Create a new layer and call it 'Sky'. Now select the Brush again and go to Acrylics, and choose the Wet Detail brush 5. Set the Resat to over 50% and the size to 130. With a navy blue paint in the sky with one solid colour.



07 BUILDING UP THE BASE COLOURS: Create additional new layers called 'Hills,' 'Town' and 'Hill', and fill those in with base colours. It's important that you use mid-tones for these areas so that when you add textures later you can build up the highlights and shadows. Pick a warm slate grey for the hills, a grey blue for the town, and an earthy green for the foreground hill.



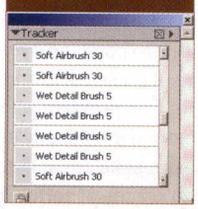
08 CREATE THE GRASS: We want the foreground hill to become lighter the closer it gets. Set the Resat to 3% and in the Layers palette, make sure the Pick Up Underlying Color box is ticked. Your brush size should be 25. Paint downwards out of the dark green to take the dark paint with you. Paint up from the white to lighten. Pick colours from the blend and build up a chunky, soft texture.



09 REFINING THE GRASS: These marks are too chunky to be blades of grass, so add more detail. Reduce the brush size to 5 and add some mid-toned blades towards the back of the hill. Working forwards, increase the brush size, and lighten the tone.

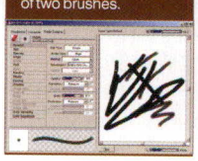
Brushing up

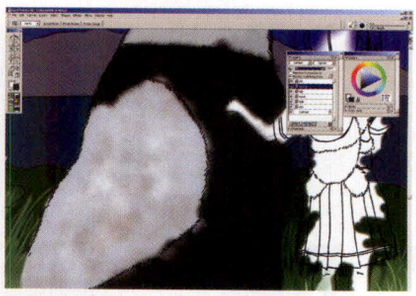
Now you have got this far, you'll have discovered a lot of time can easily be wasted changing back and forth between two or three different brushes. Luckily, those kind people down at Corel have thought about this, and have provided users with the Brush tracker. You can access it from the Window menu, and it's a handy little tool to keep on your screen. By using it you can change between your most recent brushes with ease, and it also will prevent you from forgetting the brush you were using last time you used Painter.



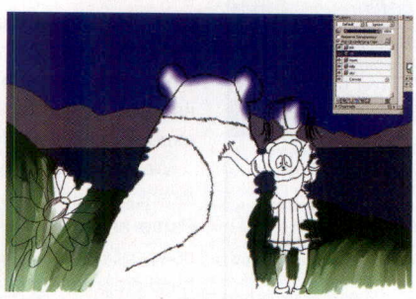
Brush creation in Painter

In this tutorial we've been able to use a few of the brushes that are supplied with Painter, and make some simple adjustments with the options on the Property bar. But sometimes you will require something different, and that's where the Brush Creator comes in. Go to Window>Brush Creator to reveal it. There are so many options here it can be a little overwhelming at first, but it's worth getting to grips with. As well as being able to adjust the size, grain, and opacity of the brush, the Randomiser and Transposer options are useful. The Randomiser creates random alternatives of the current brush, you control how extreme you it to change. The Transposer combines the properties of two brushes.





10 PAINTING PANDA FUR: Create a new layer called 'Panda', and put the Resaturation back up on the acrylic brush you are using. Paint in the flat two tones of his fur. We want a much richer texture for one of our main characters, so choose the F-X brush category from the Property bar and select Furry brush as the variant. With the opacity below 20% and varying the brush size, colour and tone, give the Panda a healthy coat of fur.



11 A COLOURFUL CHARACTER: On another new layer called 'Girl', add the basic colouring to our main character. When you're painting the black of the hair and shoes, set a high resaturation level or else the tone won't quite be black. Set the resaturation down to about 3% again so you can add some shape to the clothes. Use a smaller version of the Furry brush for her panda rucksack.

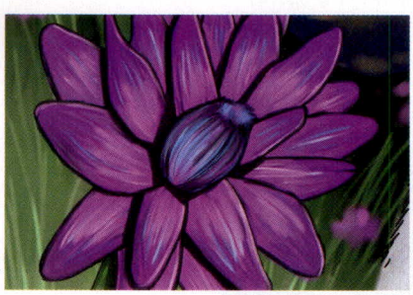
12 BRINGING THE TOWN TO LIFE: Move back down to the 'Town' layer, and using the Acrylic Wet Detail brush 5, start to paint in some small yellow and orange lights, with the brightest ones following a grid layout. Adjust the opacity, size, and resaturation levels as you go, to build up a shimmering backdrop. Put some softer lights within the grid shapes.

13 EXTRA LIGHTS AND COLOURS: As well as the small orange and yellow lights, the town needs to show a bit more vitality. Add some red and blue lights too, but then increase the brush size to around 50, and set the opacity really low to add some lighter, broad highlights. This pushes the town back a little and softens it.

14 ADD SHADING TO THE HILLS: With the same brush, select the 'Hills' layer and paint in some broad strokes so that the blue of the 'Town' layer fades into the slate grey of the hills. Select some darker tones to give the hills more definition, and then some smaller, lighter tones towards the top of the hills.

15 ADDING CLOUDS TO THE SKY: Return to the 'Sky' layer, and using the wet detail brush add some heavy clouds. Use a light blue for a break in the clouds, and use a large brush to mark out the changes in tone. Gradually make the brush smaller, smudging the tones to build subtle soft detail.

16 THE FLOWERS ON THE HILL: Add a new layer beneath the ink outline called 'Flower'. Using a pastel grey/purple, paint in the main flower on the left hand side of the foreground, but also add several specks of colour over the rest of the grass. Vary the brightness of the marks as you go.



17 BRING THE FLOWER TO LIFE: We will now work above the ink outline layer. Create a new layer at the top, and call it 'Flower'. Set the size to 10, and bring shape and various tonal styles to the petals. Make the Soft Airbrush 30 a size 2.5, and with a dark grey give the flower some crisp edges.

18 ADD SOME HIGHLIGHTS TO THE PANDA: On a new panda layer above the ink outlines, use the furry brush you used previously to cover the ink outlines. Then with a soft airbrush set to a low opacity, paint some blue highlights to the left hand side of the panda. Then use the Acrylic brush with a low resaturation to add a furry edge to these highlights. Do the same for the other side, this time with pale oranges.

19 SHADE THE GIRL: Use the Acrylic brush to add some shadows and highlights to the flesh and clothing of the girl, and blend them into each other as you go along. Then select the soft airbrush and make the outlines a sharper. Then simply add highlights to the right hand edge of the pleats in the skirt. »»

Mixing colours in Painter

A lot of the satisfaction you will get from Painter comes from the way that it really does mimic traditional media very well - without all the mess, of course. It also features a novel way of way of mixing colour, well, novel for a piece of digital software at any rate. Start by going to the Window menu to open the Mixer. As you'll find, it works just like an artist's palette. You can paint some different colours onto the mini canvas, which doubles up as a little practice/test area, and use the Palette Knife to smudge them together to find the perfect tone.

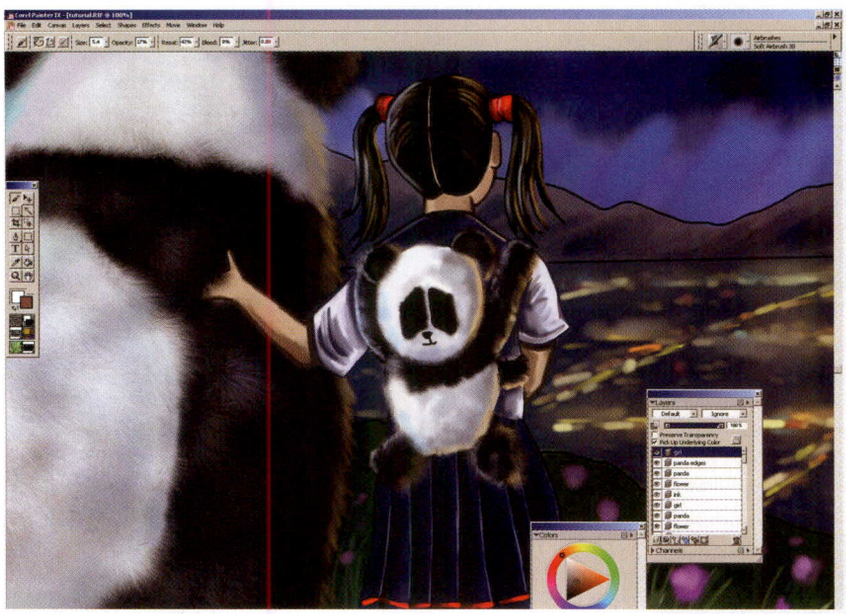
It starts with the pencil

It's one thing to learn the strengths of the software that you use, but this is irrelevant without a well-planned idea to use those skills on. The work you do in your sketchbook beforehand is so important. Whether it's getting the composition just right, or making sure each element has enough detail, it's imperative to get it right before you start. One artist who knows this is James Jean. James' website shows how his marvellous sketches develop through to beautiful final pieces of artwork. Be sure to visit www.jamesjean.com

Colour combinations in Photoshop

Photoshop lets users alter the colour balance of image elements with ease. Here we've used lots of colours for the fireworks, but the base tones are the green of the grass and the purple sky. These colours complement each other and contrast with the girl's clothing. Studying the simplicity of flat colours in vector-based artworks is one way to learn about colour combinations, even if your bitmap image will ultimately look more complex. Van Beater's work is a great example of this (**www.vanbeater.com**).

workshop: [photoshop & painter]



20 SHADE THE HAIR AND RUCKSACK: We don't want the hair to look flat, so apply the Acrylic brush we've been using. Set its size to around 5 and use it to add various brown tones to the hair and make it nice and shiny. To match the lighting on the panda, add pale blue highlights to the left hand side, and a pale orange one to the right. Use the same techniques you used on the big panda, but with smaller brushes, to add highlights to the panda rucksack.

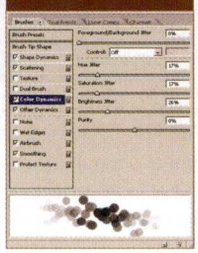
21 GRASS, LOTS OF GRASS: Create a new layer called 'Grass' immediately above the ink outline layer. Using the same method as before, add dozens of new blades of grass. Vary the tones, and increase the size of the brush and length of the blades as you approach the foreground. Create a further new layer above the flower and panda highlights layers and paint in further grass strokes to overlay these elements.

22 CHALK UP THE HILLS: While it's not wise to use too many brush styles, we do need to take a new approach to the hills. Select Pastels and the Artist pastel chalk as the brush variant. With the opacity below 20%, and using various sizes, add more marks to the hills, and street lights.

23 ADDITIONAL OUTLINES: While our original black outlines were a little harsh and we don't need outlines everywhere, our main characters do need a little more definition. Use a thin soft airbrush to add extra black outlines. Again, for the panda use short tight strokes to represent the fur, rather than continuous lines.

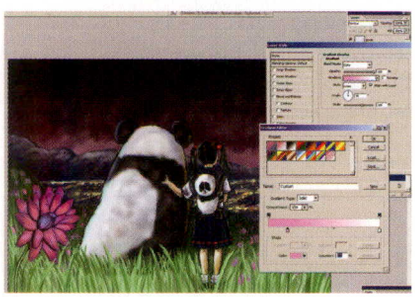
Brush Dynamics

We've touched upon Photoshop brush dynamics in this tutorial, and as we've seen, they're perfect for creating firework effects. But if you've not explored them before now it really is worth looking a little deeper because they offer a staggering amount of power and flexibility. We've used Shape Dynamics, Scattering, and even a Dual Brush technique, but that's just the starting point. One of the most exciting aspects of this is Color Dynamics, where you can set the brush colour to fluctuate as you point. As you can imagine, it's great for building tonal textures quickly. Furthermore, when we used the Dual brush technique in this tutorial, we used a very simple brush. But seeing as in Photoshop you can create your own brushes in any way you like the possibilities are literally infinite. Have fun!

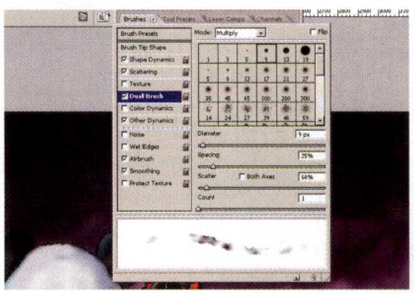


24 FROM PAINTER TO PHOTOSHOP: Zoom out of your image if you have not already and take a look at the whole piece. Now is the time to make any improvements or add any additional details (like eyes on the panda backpack) using the techniques we've used so far. When you're ready, make a final save of your Painter file. Then go to Save > Save As, and save your piece as a .PSD file. Make sure that Color space is set to RGB.

25 COLOUR ADJUSTMENTS: Boot up Photoshop and open the new .PSD file you have just created with your layers intact. Select the main flower layer above the ink outline (the one with all the details) and go to Image > Adjustments > Replace Color. Select the main mid-tone purple of the flower and increase the Hue by around 50 with the Fuzziness value at around 120. If you have any of the background flowers on different layers, apply the same technique.

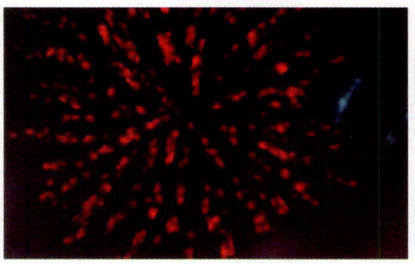


26 **A CHANGE TO THE SKY:** With the 'Sky' layer selected, go to Layer > Layer Style > Gradient Overlay. Set the Blend Mode to Color and with the angle at 90°, apply a gradient that fades from white at the top (which in this blending mode fades to black effectively) into a pastel pink. This provides a much better contrast with the main characters.

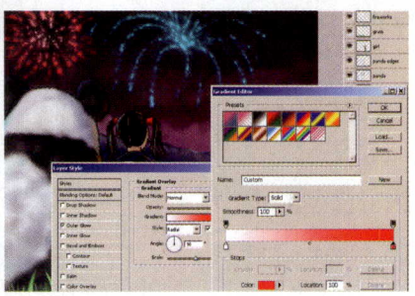


27 **INDOOR FIREWORKS:** Create a new layer and name it 'Fireworks'. Select the Brush tool and a soft-edged tip of about 20 pixels from the default brush set. To the top right of the screen on the Options palette, you'll see the Brushes tab. Open it and turn on Scattering. Drag the scattering slider to approximately 300%. Now check the Dual Brush box and select the brush with a diameter of 9. This masks the scattering within a smaller brush, making it perfect for sparking fireworks.

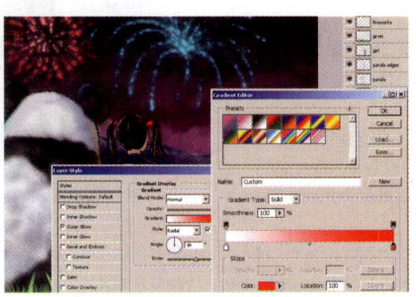
28 **LIGHTS IN THE SKY:** Use your new brush to paint the arcs of a firework spreading out from a central point. Go to Layer > Layer Styles and apply an Outer Glow to the layer. The Blend mode should be set to Screen, the Opacity should be 100%, the Spread should be 2%, and the Size around 20px. Go to Filter > Blur > Radial Blur and apply a radial blur to the firework, ensuring the Blur center is as close to the centre of the firework as possible.



29 **ROUND FIREWORK:** With the same Sparkly brush, select a red colour this time. Start painting a firework with a more circular shape and with smaller sparks that radiate out from the centre. Because the brush scattering misses out different areas with each stroke, you'll need to build the shape up with overlapping strokes.



30 **A RADIAL GRADIENT:** Go to Layer > Layer Style and apply a Gradient Overlay to the new firework. Set the Style to Radial so that you can set the centre of the firework to white, and the outer edges to red. You'll also need to apply an Outer glow in a red or pink tone.



31 **SMUDGING THE SPARKS:** Select the Smudge tool. Set the strength to 100% and the size around 12, and then with a soft-edged brush drag the sparks out to enhance the explosive effect. Create a new layer beneath and use a white Scattering brush without a Dual brush effect to add extra particles at the centre of the firework.

Brush creation in Photoshop

Not only does Photoshop supply you with a wide range of brushes - hundreds, in fact - you can also use the software to create your own. You might want to scan something in and create a brush with that or even take something that's in your image already, so you can replicate it more easily. Copy and paste the element into a new document and go to Edit > Define Brush Preset. It will appear at the bottom of the current brush set you're using. In this case you might want to turn the fireworks themselves into brushes.

32 **MINI FIREWORKS:** With a smaller version of the Scattering Dual brush you've been using, create a new layer for some small white fireworks. Make these ones more like sparklers, with short sparks radiating out from their centres. As before, add an outer glow to the layer, this time with a bright yellow. Create four or five of these across the sky.

33 **THE FINAL FINISHING POINTS:** There's not really a limit to the amount or type of fireworks you can add, so continue filling the sky with your own creations. You'll get a great effect by duplicating the firework layers you create, and slightly rotating them a few times. This really increases the brightness and therefore the overall effect. Also use a layer with an outer glow style to add some extra bright lights in the town. ■

Studio Ghibli and Hayao Miyazaki

If you've enjoyed producing this image, you may enjoy watching the spectacular movies of Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli. Howl's Moving Castle is the latest (http://disney.go.com/disneypictures/castle), but Studio Ghibli has also produced several beautiful movies under his watchful and experienced eye. As well as their unique spirit of adventure and magic (and often-surreal settings) they are also defined by their incredible animation and background artwork. *Princess Mononoke*, and *Castle in the Sky*, are also definitely worth your time.

THE ARTIST

Rhys Davies: With more than eight years of digital design experience behind him, multimedia master Rhys Davies has cultivated an in-depth knowledge of countless creative applications. Despite such a wide area of expertise, he still firmly rates illustrator as one of his most utilised and adaptable creative tools.

On the CD: Link to **www.dafonts.co.uk**, Type_art_final.tif

Freestyle type art

Discover how to create an iconic illustration with urban appeal using only a handful of freeware symbol fonts and a little imagination…

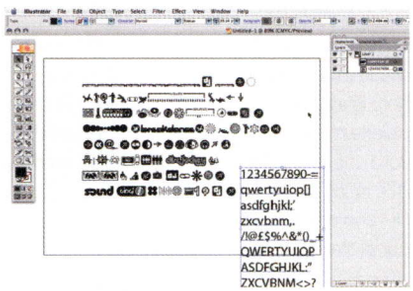
Handling type in Illustrator has never been easier, and with a little guidance you'll discover just how simple creating stunning vector artwork can be using nothing more than a handful of carefully selected fonts.

Thanks to the internet, freeware fonts are easily accessible and can act as an extremely versatile tool when creating an illustrative project. By utilising Illustrator's focal tools and a clever use of composition, layer blending modes and gradient fills - creating vector artwork needn't be all about the Bezier Pen.

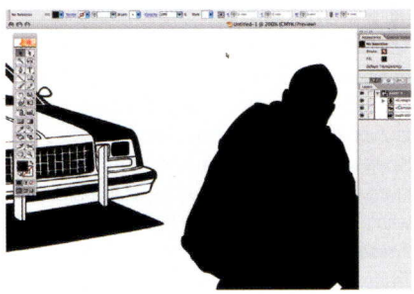
In this tutorial, we have used a carefully selected a group of iconic (symbol) fonts, that can be downloaded free of charge from **www dafont.com**. Over the next three pages you'll discover the process of turning this small collection of fonts, comprised of Celebrity, Superstar DJ, Deejay Supreme, The B.O.M.B. GE Zoom and Philly Dings, into the eye catching urban street theme you see before you.

Try selecting fonts based on both their structural and aesthetic quality, and at this point don't concern yourself with the actual character elements, merely select typefaces that offer a diverse range of shapes and symbols. By thinking laterally you will end up with a much more exciting result. We have chosen some abstract as well the more conventional offerings to allow creative scope when composing a scene.

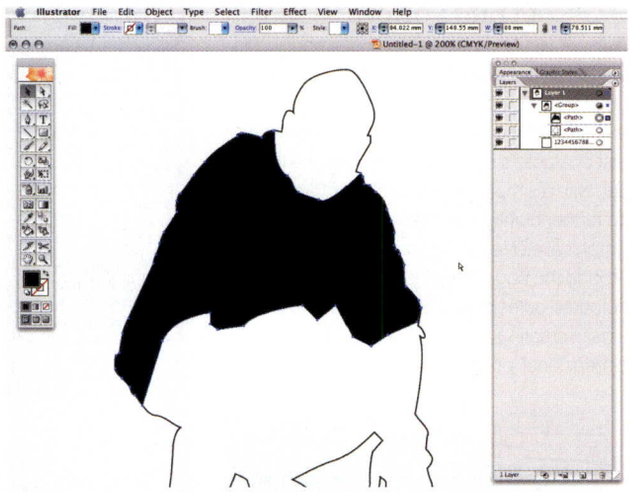
By being unconventional when using type, this tutorial will give you an alternative way to handle text in Illustrator, and will hopefully teach you a few handy tricks and techniques that you will want to revisit time and again on your future digital projects….and once you get up to speed all you really need is a little imagination.



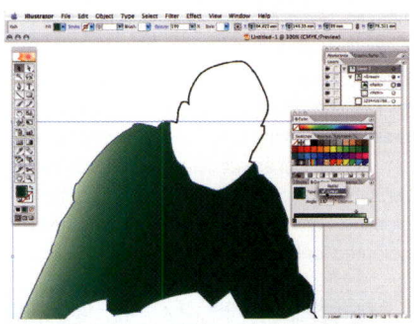
01 LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT: On a fresh document, create a new text layer. Type out each alphanumeric character on the keyboard in both lower case and in capitals and then format the text to the first of your symbolic fonts. Duplicate this layer for each of your chosen fonts. This may seem a mess right now, but it's a super fast way to compare and contrast your font symbols without the hassle of jumping from app to app.



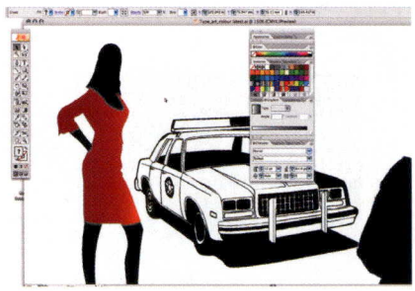
02 COMPOSITION IS KEY: Working outwards from the focus point (in this case the male character) arrange your elements with consideration to perspective, largest closest. You may be lucky enough to find three dimensional looking symbols amongst your fonts, such as the police car used here. As you build, maintain the abstract style by trying not to crowd the page.



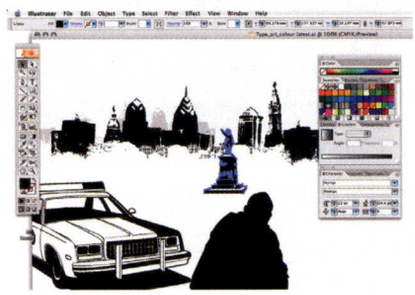
03 SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR FONT: From this point on, it is time to start saying goodbye to your fonts. With your text character selected (in this first case the crouching silhouette) Choose Type > Create outlines from the menu bar and remove the fill from the text before selecting Object > Ungroup. At this stage your layers palette will display a number of differently layered compound paths. To enable full editing of the character, each one must be released. With each compound path selected choose 'Release to layers (build)' from the layers palette menu. The result with leave each character's path fully editable and on a separate layer.



04 FIND YOUR STYLE: Once you're happy with your base composition it's time to start thinking colour, or more specifically style. For the illustrative technique demonstrated here, the key is simple block colour and adopting a primary based colour scheme. Effective fills can bring your newly acquired icon to life, and by using carefully selected tints and shades, you can achieve tone and shadow. Simply select the piece you want to fill with colour, in this case the man's torso, and use the swatches or create your own custom gradients to add depth.



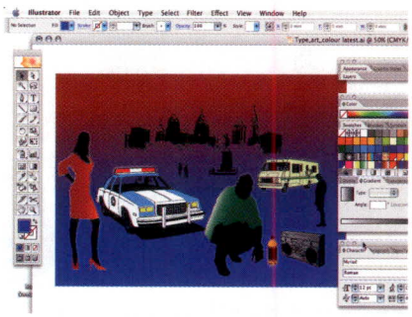
05 A TOUCH OF CLASS: To add further characters to the scene, a font called B.O.M.B offers a few simple silhouettes, and we have chosen a female outline to add to the composition. In order to maintain the neat outline provided by the font, the character was converted to outlines and then duplicated. Using the 'Knife tool', swiftly dissect and delete from the knee to ankle of the duplicate layer, leaving three vector shapes. Use the 'Sub-select tool' to round off the top section to form the neckline and hem of a theoretical dress, shaping the remaining lower parts into a pair of stilettos, shading accordingly with a red gradient fill a wardrobe is born.



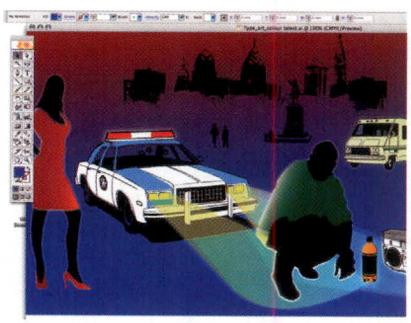
06 CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT: The urban skyline is created by selecting some buildings from a font named Philly Dings. The linear shape of six sky scrapers can be tweaked to fit by duplicating one of the structures and adding the cathedral tower - pasted in from another character in the set, to balance the skyline. The statue-esque structure has also been slightly altered. The original character featured a building to the right, which, once the font was converted to outlines, was easily removable. After scaling the structure, the finishing touch is to duplicate the building layer. Offset-it behind and to the right of the original and dropping its opacity down to around 15% to create a sense of distance to the horizon. »»

Expert tip

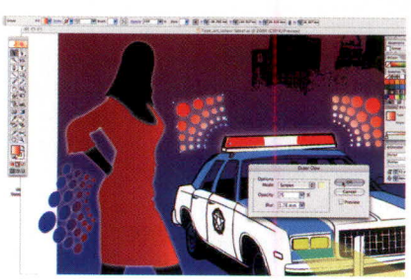
Removing font complications when sending files to other computers is a must and is achievable by converting fonts to outlines. This is useful when using typography within design work, especially if text is the very foundation of a particular design. Once converted to a path, the character is fully adaptable as any other vector object, and fully embedded within the illustrator file. You should note that once converted to outlines the words/ characters themselves are no longer editable as a type layer – purely as paths…so check your spelling before making the switch!



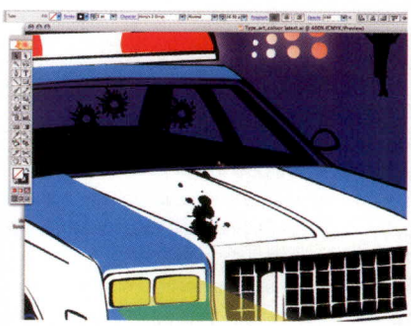
07 DRAWING A CROWD: A few silhouettes from the Celebrity font can be scaled accordingly to enhance the sense of perspective. Add a rectangular vector to frame the entire piece and position it as the bottom layer to the file before applying a custom background gradient to give the picture a night-time feel. Deep colours such as blues and reds cause a vibrant purple crossover.



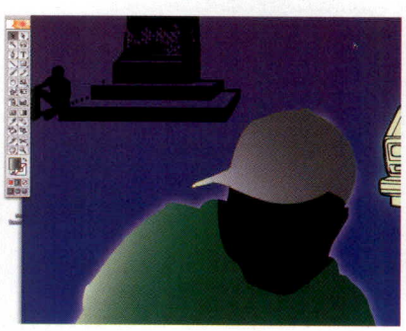
08 SHEDDING SOME LIGHT: Using the 'Bezier pen tool', draw a solid rectangular shape projecting out of each of the headlights. Applying a custom gradient fill of white through to yellow, set the 'Layer blending mode' to 'Overlay' and their opacity to 70%. Draw two more yellow beams overlaying the four beneath. Reduce the opacity to 50% and cut the beam back.



09 GETTING NOTICED: To create a visual implication of movement within the piece, the circular spectrum shapes should be placed around some of the leading elements of the design. These are once again just characters selected from within the font set, with a simple gradient colour-fill applied. To further highlight and accentuate the graphical elements, move systematically around the page applying a subtle cream coloured outer glow to each iconic shape. This aids in creating a suggestively three-dimensional look to the objects.



10 FONT ON FONT: To further enhance your elements, customise the symbols by incorporating elements of one font onto the layers directly above another. This adds finer detail to the larger symbols and a quickfast way to tailor the fonts' generic icons to your specifically themed requirements. The bullet holes on the patrol car and splats on its on cars bonnet are perfect examples of this, as is the stylised design on the characters clothing – all nothing more than scaled and coloured font on font action.



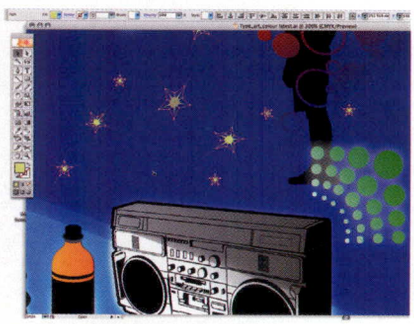
11 FORMERLY KNOWN AS SYMBOL: With some careful scouring of CS2's extensive library palettes and a little creative thinking Symbols are a super fast way to achieve some instant stylisation, which by a few simple clicks can be made fully editable paths. The best technique here is to choose 'Break link' from the symbols palette menu with the symbol selected, and voila, the symbol is now a fully editable path - a little resizing and a touch of a custom gradient fill - and a suitable piece of attire is born and our protagonist now has headwear.

Being Selective

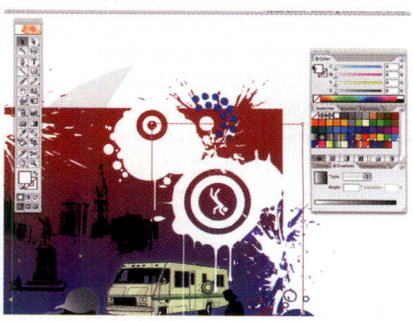
The key to editing a path is being able to select it. There will be countless occasions when you will only need or want to select individual anchor points or perhaps just a particular section of a path. Illustrator has five methods of selection, all of which are located within the toolbox. The most frequently utilized and perhaps the most useful of these are the Selection and Direct Selection tools.
The Selection tool (the black arrow) does exactly what it says on the tin, allowing you to select a path, object or multiple objects at one time. The Direct Selection tool (the white arrow) does as its name suggests, allowing you to be more direct. This is a widely used tool throughout almost all illustration work enabling you to select specific sections of a path of object (including just the points) making it ideal for more intricate details.

Stroke the path

If you don't have a graphics tablet, you may find it easier to apply shadows or highlights using the Stroke The Path command. With the Pen tool, draw the curve that you want your brush stroke to follow. Pick the Brush tool and choose a brush the size of the largest part of your intended stroke. Go to the Brushes palette in Shapes Dynamics, set the Size Jitter to Fade and, by trial and error, choose the number of steps needed. Doing this will make the stroke smaller as it goes along the path. Go to the Paths palette and click the Stroke icon. The brush stroke will be smooth and can be any shape you want.



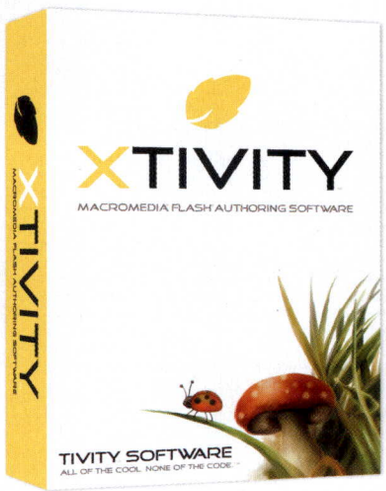
12 GETTING PROPS: Search your fonts for some supporting objects enhancing your chosen theme. Bring them to life by colouring and shading them in a similar fashion to the earlier base character elements. Sparkle has been added with some simple stars shapes. These are a simple star drawn with the 'Shape tool' with a high degree of 'Pucker' applied through Effect > Distort and Transform > Pucker & Bloat.



13 A LICK OF PAINT: To finalise add abstract iconography. Drawing once again from the font the B.O.M.B are the paint splats and circular blobs. Resized and grey-scaled, the symbols have been arranged to break up the hard edge of the background, whilst giving the finished piece a dirtier feel, more suited to its content matter. Freestyle Type Art is nothing more than arranging a few fonts and adding some colour... easy! ■

All of the Cool None of the Code™

Xtivity™ is a new, professional Macromedia® Flash® (SWF) Authoring Software program that allows you to visually design interactive Flash web projects in a layout style workflow. There is no coding involved and you operate without using a timeline, symbols, movie clips or any of the traditional methods used to author interactive Flash projects.



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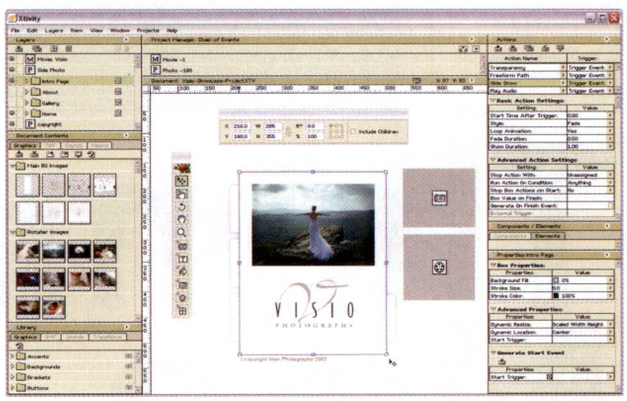

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THE ARTIST

Simon Danaher: Simon Danaher is a 3D graphics expert, author and artist. He has written five best-selling books on computer graphics including *The Complete Guide To Digital 3D Design* and contributed to several others. Clients include Saatchi & Saatchi and BBC Worldwide and you can see some of his commercial work at **www.portfolios.com/danaher**, and at **www.theispot.com**

On the CD: This character is called Hannya and the image used can be found at: **www.nohmask21.com/eu/hannya2-1.html** (you'll find the link on the CD). There are plenty of other inspirational Noh mask images online.

The mask of Maya

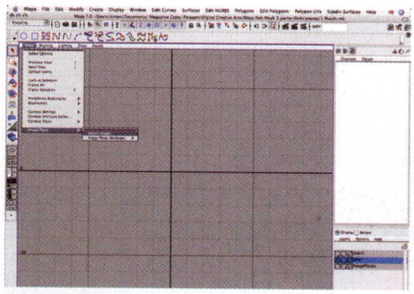
Maya Noh mask tutorial Part 1of 3

Use Maya's powerful polygon modelling tools to build a mask. In this, the first of a three part tutorial, we'll cover texturing and lighting

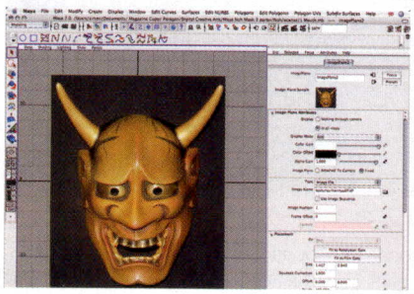
In this series of tutorials we'll look at how to build, add texture and animate a model of a Japanese Noh mask. Noh masks have been used in traditional Japanese theatre for hundreds of years, and are cleverly designed so that the expression changes depending on the angle of view; tilted forwards a face looks happy, tilted back it looks sad.

With digital technology we don't need to rely on visual trickery - we can go right in and keyframe it. We'll carefully build our character based on a Noh mask character called Hyanna (a demon), texture it and finally set it up so that it can be animated with the minimum of fuss.

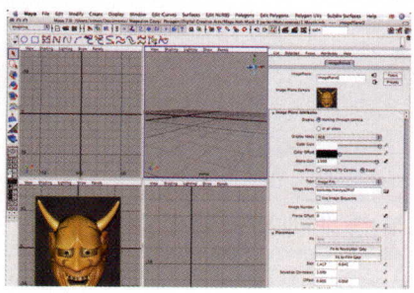
Polygonal modelling in Maya is fast and fluid, and we can make use of Maya's image planes to help guide us. The technique we've chosen gives a good overview of face modelling and Maya's polygon tools, plus it is particularly suited to creating soft, organic surfaces such as a character's face. As with most branches of 3D design, there are many ways to create results, and these tools and techniques are just one option. Part of the fun of working in 3D is finding out new and better ways of doing something. Maya's polygon toolset is extensive, though at first sight there seems to be some notible absences. Check out each of a tool's options as they're more in depth than they first appear.



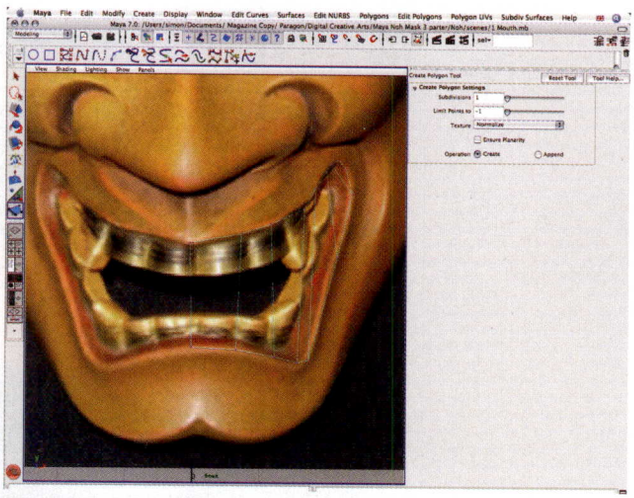
01 LOAD A PLANE: The first step is to load the guide image in the Front View. Choose View > Image Plane > Import Image from the Front View menu (not Maya's main menu). In the Open Dialog box navigate to the Hannya image to load it into the pane.



02 LOADED WITH IMAGES: For this model it's not hyper-critical that the model is exact, so we'll only use a front image as a guide. There can be problems using photos instead of drawings, because perspective distortion can make it difficult to line up features in different images. We're OK because we've only the one image.



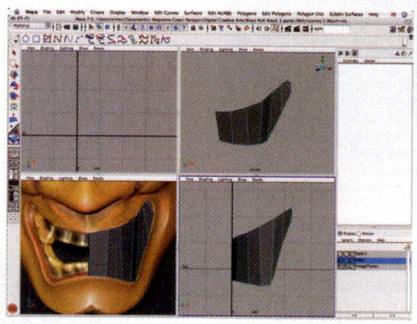
03 CHANGING THE VIEW: Choose View > Image Plane > Image Plane Attributes > ImagePlane1 to open it's attributes. Change the display setting to 'Looking through camera' so that it only appears in the front view. If you look at the perspective view it'll have disappeared.



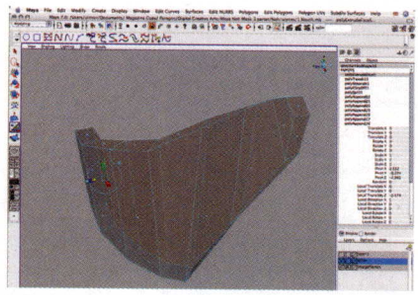
04 AROUND THE MOUTH: Begin by drawing a single quad polygon over the mouth with the Create Polygon tool and then extend it with the Append Polygon tool until the mouth opening is covered over with six polygons. Another way to do it would be to trace the entire mouth outline with a single polygon and then use the Split Polygon tool to divide it into quads.

Working with layers

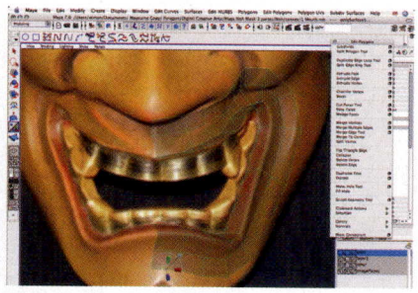
Maya's layers can be found below the Channel box on the right-hand side. Click the only icon there to add a new layer, select the objects you want to add to it then right-click the layer and choose Add Selected Objects from the options. The boxes next to the layer allow you to show and hide the layer contents and change their display state. 'R' is Reference mode, which displays objects as normal but makes them unelectable in the 3D views. 'T' is for Template mode which is like Reference except objects are displayed in wireframe only. You can change the layer name by double-clicking it. In the dialog you can also set a colour for the layer which helps with organising a series of elements. Layers allow other operations on groups of objects too, such as enabling you to select them all at once and change their shading mode independently from the current view's setting.



05 SELECT VERTICIES: In Vertex component selection mode (press 'F8' on the keyboard or use the Selection mask buttons at the top of Maya's interface, or better still right-click and choose Vertex from the Marking menu) select the vertices and move them back in the side and perspective views to create the 3D shape of the mouth.

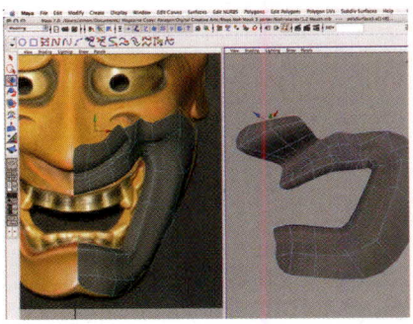


06 EXTRUDE THE FACES: Switch to Face mode and select all the polygons. Now choose Edit Polygon > Extrude Face to begin extruding the polygons back to make the edges of the lips. Drag the manipulator Z handle (Move, not Scale) to extrude the faces to the desired depth; it's the edge ring of polys we are interested in.

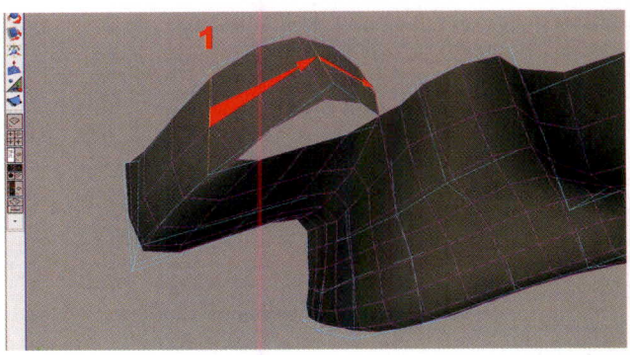


07 EXTRUDE AND REPEAT: Select the garbage polygons, the front and back of the extrusion and delete them to leave the ring. In Edge mode, select the outer ring and choose Edit Polygons > Extrude Edge. Drag the Z and Y manipulators to extrude the loop. Repeat by hitting Return and running Extrude Edge again to make a second loop.

08 SMOOTH IT: Here we've extruded a third time and edited the points to wrap the mesh around the sides of the face. Apply Polygons > Smooth Proxy. Select the mesh, setting it as 'Reference mode' layer. »»

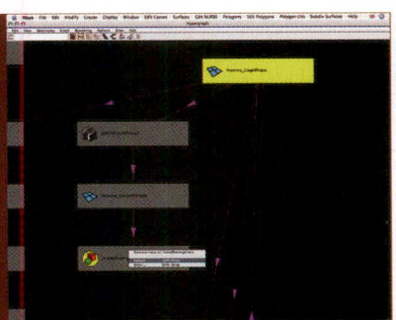


09 NOSE JOB: After a little tweaking of the points of the mesh we can begin the nose, which is always a little tricky. Three edges above the lip are selected and extruded a few times using Edge Extrude again to create the nose tip. At the side of the nose, fold the geometry around and reconnect it.

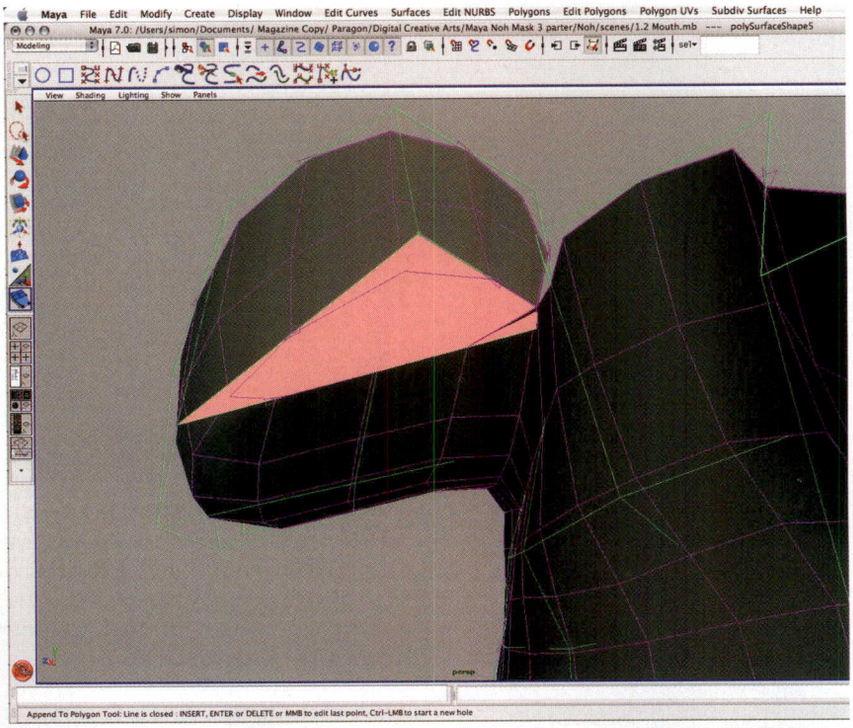


10 TIME FOR TOPOLOGY: To do this the edge '1' is selected and extruded twice out and back to make the nose flange as indicated by the arrows. The lower vertex is then merged with the face mesh at the cheek leaving the hole in the mesh which can be filled in. Note that we can always cut in more geometry if need to later using the Slice Polygon tool. It is topology which is important at the moment.

Smooth proxy



Although Maya has a full implementation of Subdivision surfaces it also has a similar polygon-only version called Smooth Proxy. If you've used SubD modelling in other apps such as Cinema 4D or Lightwave then the Smooth Proxy feature will be very familiar. True subdivision surfaces in Maya are a bit different but most of the same modelling results can be done with Smooth Proxy instead. When you run this command on a polygon mesh a number of things happen. First a group is created containing the original mesh and the smoothed version. The original mesh is disconnected from the default shading group so that in Shaded mode it doesn't obscure the smoothed surface but it's wireframe will still be visible. You can relink it simply by dragging and dropping the node onto the Initial Shading Group node in the Hypergraph, reapplying the material in the Hypershade view.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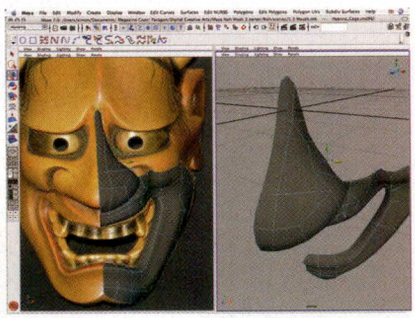
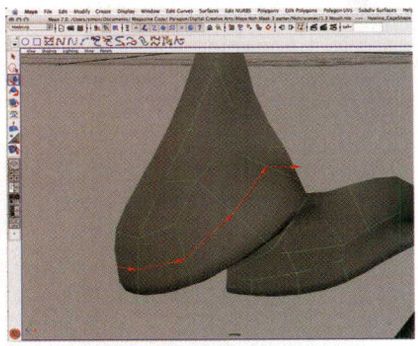
View Shading Lighting Show Panels
persp
Append To Polygon Tool: Line is closed : INSERT, ENTER or DELETE or MMB to edit last point, Ctrl-LMB to start a new hole

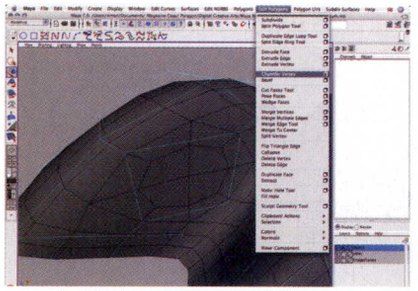
11 BRIDGING THE GAP: To fill the hole choose the Append Polygon tool from the Edit Polygon menu. Click one of the edges on the hole to select the mesh and display the pink direction arrows. The arrows show the winding direction of the polygons. Click around the points you want to close in the direction of the arrows and hit Return to close the hole. Although ours looks triangular, it is infact a quad.



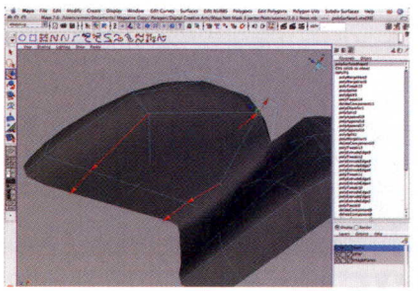
12 BUILD TO PERFECTION: The rest of the nose can now be built in a similar way, extruding, appending and filling any holes that are created. Do keep in mind though that the mesh will be animated later. Begin by extending the bridge of the nose up to the brow line, then fill in the side and move the vertices into position referencing the photo as a constant guide.



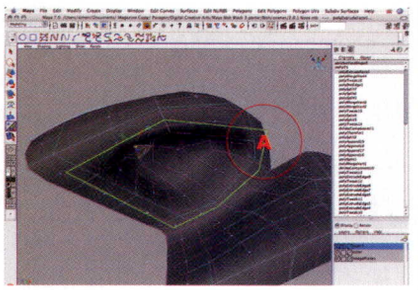
13 SPLITTING THE POLYGON: Realising there's not enough geometry to get the nose into the right shape we will take a moment to split the row of polygons at the front of the nose using the Split Polygon tool, cutting in an extra line of edges where we need them. To use the tool simply click on the edges starting on an outside edge, working inwards to another open edge. This avoids the creation of n-gons or triangles.



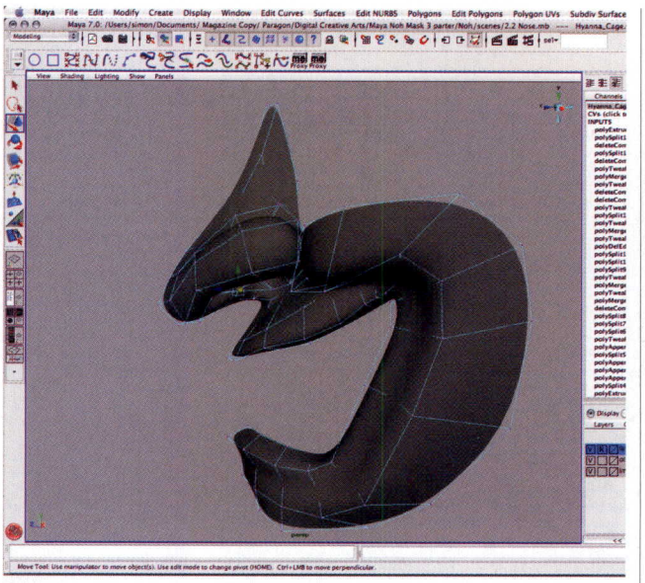
14 **SELECT AND CHAMFER:** To make the nasal hole, the centre vertex third from the edge in the row of points under the nose needs to be selected and chamfered. In the Channel box the Chamfer node can be reselected and the offset changed to increase the hole size. We've used a value of 0.75. The chamfer does however create n-gons around it's perimeter, which need dealing with.



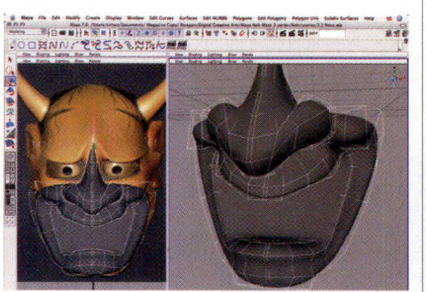
15 **CUTTING THE MESH:** To get rid of the five point n-gons on the left, use the Split Polygon tool to cut out to the edge of the mesh, leaving all quads. On the right, the vertex of the chamfer operation is moved and merged with the vertex belonging to the right n-gons. Leave all quads here as well.



16 **IN THE CAVITY:** You can extrude the single chamfer polygon or include the two adjacent polys created by the cutting. We've extruded all three, before doing so use the Cut tool on the polygons in area A.



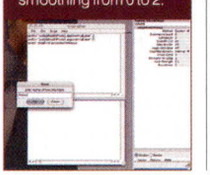
17 **SHAPING TO PERFECTION:** As the model is being built it's constantly being refined and edited to gradually sculpt the overall shape. This is almost impossible to describe in a tutorial because of the countless steps of selecting and moving vertices, taking a step back and reviewing the overall form, editing again etc, that are needed. Here, though, a major alteration was carried out, moving the whole nose back into the face more. Because of the lack of side reference, things had gotten a little out of hand in the Z direction, but it's easily fixed.

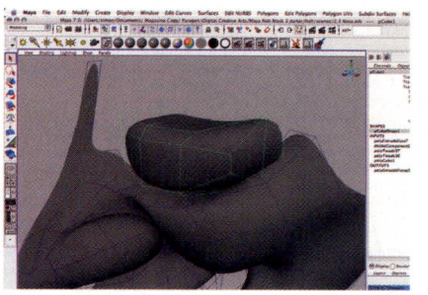


18 **TESTING TIMES:** As you can see, we are modeling just the one side, but at any time you can check your progress by selecting the cage in object mode and choosing Polygons > Mirror geometry to make a mirror copy of the mesh. You can edit the Mirror node in the Channel box to adjust the settings, and then either undo or delete the node to carry on.

Custom commands

Creating custom commands within the Maya interface is a lot easier than you might expect. For this tutorial's workflow it can help to change the subdivision level of the smoothed mesh to 0 so you can see the cage in OpenGL shaded mode. To do this select the 'polySmoothProxy1' attribute on the cage object and set the exponential level to 0. To save you having to hunt for this attribute every time you want to change it open the Script Editor and look for the command you recently executed <setAttr"polySmoothProxy1.exponentialLevel" 0;> Highlight this in the Script Editor and choose 'Save Selected To Shelf' from the Script Editor's File menu. Name it Prox0. Change the exponential level 2 in the Channel box and repeat the procedure. Giving you two buttons on the shelf to quickly change the smoothing from 0 to 2.

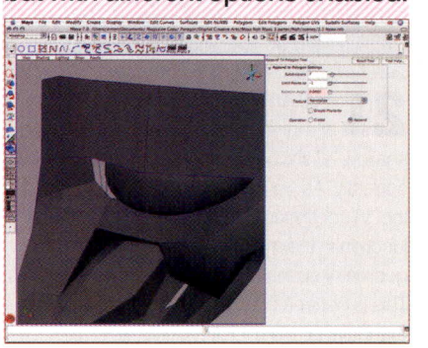


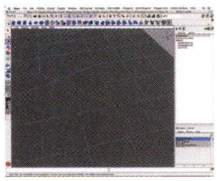


19 **EYE, EYE CAPTAIN:** The eye is added to help form the upper cheek and eye area of the face. The eye itself is formed from a polygon cube with three subdivisions along its width, and the front three faces extruded forward and scaled inward a little. It's point-edited to get the right curved shape. The lower cheek is then built up using Extrude Edge and Append Polygon to join the new faces to the old. »»

Appending polygons

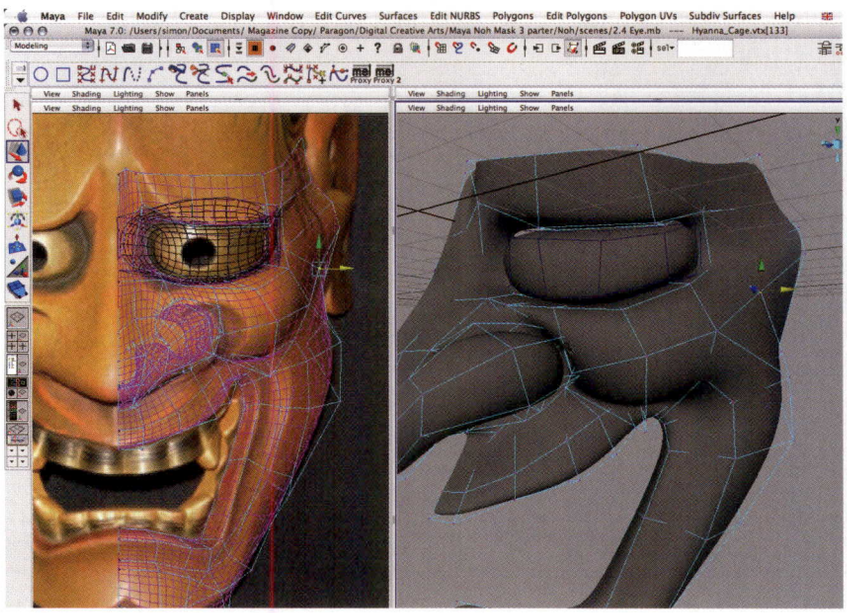
Maya's polygons are not the usual sort, but have a bit more intelligence. Maya differentiates between normal edges and border edges which are highlighted in a thicker green when using some tools such as Append Polygon. You also have to pay attention to the winding direction when using Append Polygon to select the points in the right direction or you'll get failed polygon fills. You may run in to problems due to a badly formed mesh topology, so pay attention when building your mesh. You can also append using the Create Polygon tool; just enable the option in the Create Polygon options. They are the same tool, but with different options enabled.





Feeling snappy?

Another way to work with welding vertices is to use Maya's 'snapping' feature, which is very effective. The hot keys for snapping are always available as you model and are 'latchable' which means they are only active while the hot key is held down. They are also available as ongoing modes by tapping the hot keys quickly or by using the buttons at the top right of the interface. When modelling you can use the snap to point hot key 'P' to snap one point to others on your mesh. You can then select both points by marqueeing them and running Merge Vertices to weld the points together. The default value of 0 (actually 0.0001) will now work immediately because the points are coincident. Another useful snapping key is 'C' which is called 'Snap to Spline' but also allows you to snap polygon vertices to polygon edges and points too. When using this tool you need to click just inside the circle on the cursor over the edge you want to snap along. Using this tool you can slide points along adjacent edges.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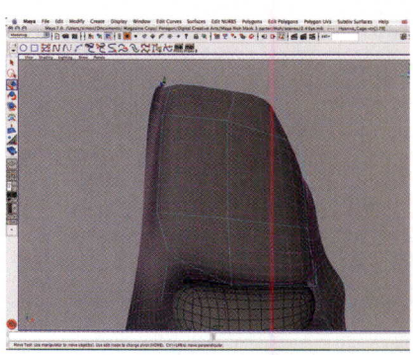
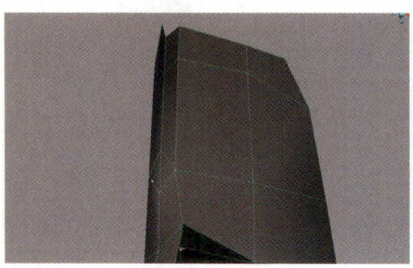
Modeling
View Shading Lighting Show Panels

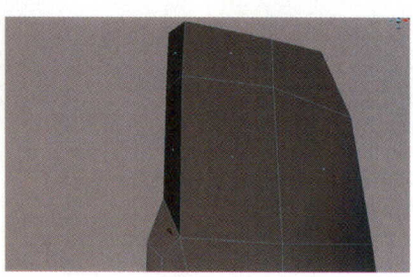
20 ALL ABOUT THE EYES: Follow the shape of the eye to create the brow by extruding edges. The side of the face is also built up in the same way and then joined to the brow. It's surprising how useful the image plane in the front view is for helping get the right shape even though it is only in the one plane. Sculpt the vertices to create the flow of the cheek around the eye socket and up to the ears.



21 FOLDING THE BROW: Notice at the inner brow edge we've created a shallow 'V' shape to create the fold of the frown correctly. As we extend the forehead upwards the 'V' continues too. We need to create a junction in the mesh to remove the excess geometry so that the 'V' is smoothed away. This is better than trying to move the vertices manually to make it flat.



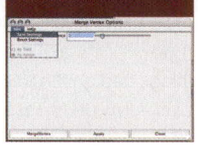
22 CUTTING DIAMONDS: First move the ringed vertex down. Using the Slice Polygon tool, cut from the vertex to the right of it up to the edge extending up from it. The cut is continued to the vertex directly on the left at the edge of the mesh creating a diamond shape of two triangles.

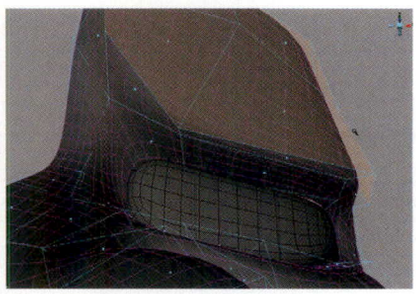


23 DELETE DIAMONDS: The edge between the two triangles can be selected and deleted to leave a single diamond-shaped quad (use the Delete Edge command). The two polygons above the diamond can be deleted. This junction has removed a column of polygons from the forehead and smoothed the 'V' out.

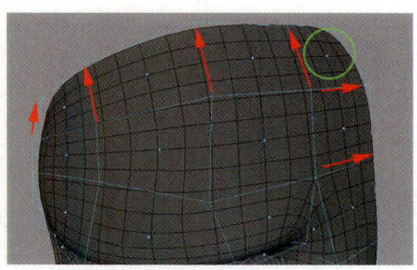
Merging vertices

Maya's Merge Vertices feature, like most of the polygon editing commands, is interactive and will be added to the history list in the Channel box. If you select two points near to each other to weld and run the command you may be frustrated when nothing happens. Simply locate the 'PolyMergeVert' attribute in the 'Channel box', click to select then scroll down to the very bottom of the list find the attributes you've just loaded up (why they don't open directly below the attribute's name is anyone's guess). Here you'll find the Distance setting which is set at 0 by default. Increase this interactively by clicking in the name (Distance in this case) not the value field, and MMB-dragging in the 3D view until the points snap together. You can of course preset this value before running the command by choosing Merge Vertices [Options box] and entering the value. To make the new value the default choose 'Save settings' from the options box's 'Edit menu'.

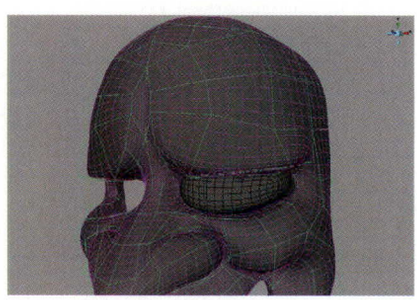




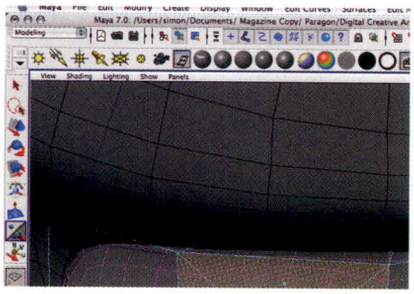
24 EXTRA DEFINITION: We realise that we are not going to get the definition of the eyebrow, which is very sharp in the image, without adding extra geometry. There are a few ways to do this, perhaps with the Slice Poly tool, or Bevel Edges. Instead we select the nine polygons that make up the brow and extrude them, dragging the manipulator in Z to add a small lip.



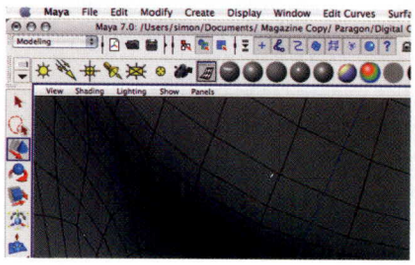
25 SPREAD THE VERTICIES: The lip extends all the way around which is not what we want. So it's a matter of grabbing the vertices at the top and sides and spreading them out. They actually come in handy because we need extra geometry to finish the forehead. Extra polygons are cut in or appended as necessary (green circle).



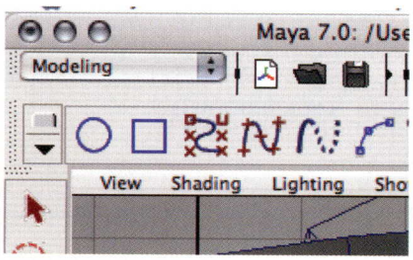
26 A CHANGE TO THE SKY: Select the 'Sky' layer, go to Layer > Layer Style > Gradient Overlay. Set the Blend Mode to Color and with the angle at 90°, apply a gradient that fades from white to pink.



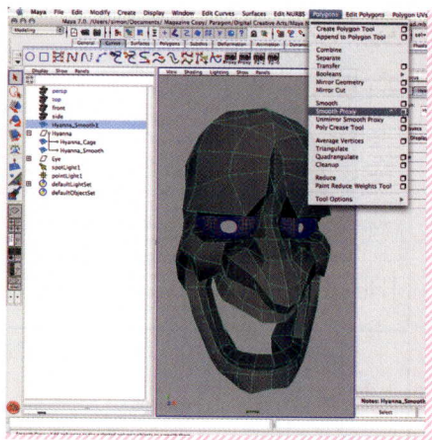
27 POKING FUN: Creating the hole in the eye is quite easy, but requires a bit of forethought. The obvious thing to do is select the polygon on the eye mesh and extrude it in, back a few times to tunnel inwards. However this will create a distorted hole, not a round one. To make a round hole first set a vertex in the centre of the polygon by using the Poke Faces command.



28 IN A HOLE: Next select the centre vertex and chamfer it instead. Increase the chamfer distance to make the polygon the size you want the hole to be. Now you can select the polygon and extrude it inwards, back etc to make the hole. Delete the back polygon when you're done.

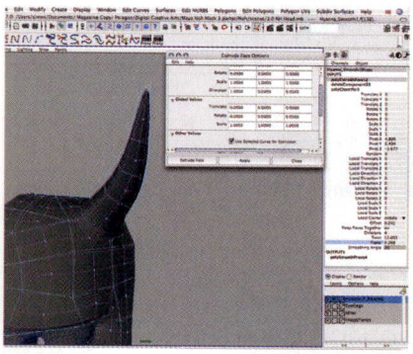


29 FEELING HORNY: The history is causing a slowdown so we freeze out the modeling state and continue (see Freezing history and Reapplying proxy boxouts). To make the horns, select a vertex on the top of the head and chamfer it as we did with the eye. Next we draw a curve in the shape of the horn.

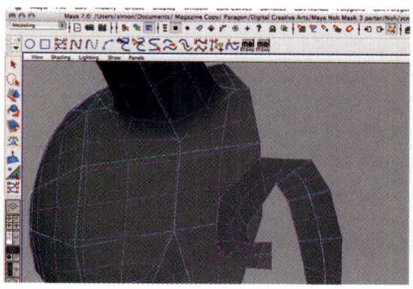


Reapplying proxy

In order to delete the past history we can copy out the 'Hyanna smooth mesh' at Subdivision level 0 and reapply the Smooth Proxy command so that it becomes the new cage object and continue modelling. To do this open the Outliner view and select the cage object and change the Smooth Proxy level to 0. Select the now-unsmoothed Hyanna smooth mesh and use Duplicate with transform or type 'Shift' & 'D' to make a quick copy of the mesh as it is without any history connections. This leaves us with the original history still intact on the other model. The original 'Hyanna Smooth Proxy' group can be hidden by typing 'Ctrl' & 'H'. Reapply Smooth Proxy to the duplicate mesh which becomes our new cage object for modelling.



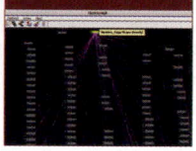
30 CURVE AND EXTRUDE: The face that was the result of the chamfer is selected and then the curve is shift-selected. In the Extrude Face options the Use Curve option is enabled and the extrude applied. Adjust the taper and divisions in the Channel box to create the horn shape.

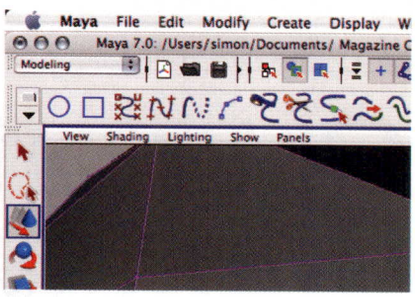


31 I'M ALL EARS: The ear can be created in the same way, but this time by extruding an edge. The ear curve is created in the side view to roughly get the right spiral shape of the ear. Once extruded you can adjust the taper and number of divisions. It's not perfect but a good start.

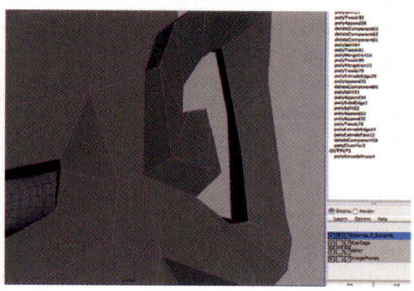
Freezing history

In Maya, unlike some 3D programs, the various steps taken to model an object are saved in the Modelling History palette. Actually each operation or step you take is created behind the scenes as a physical object called a node, and connected to the object. The nodes are evaluated like a flow diagram to generate the final state you see on screen (they can be viewed in the Hypergraph). After modelling for some time the history can become very long and eventually cause a slowdown in performance. To get the speed back to normal we can collapse the history and freeze the current state as a raw polygon mesh. However Maya's Delete History command is not the best way to do this because it also prevents any further history being created. You would generally reserve this step for when you have finished the model completely and the model is then ready for animation.

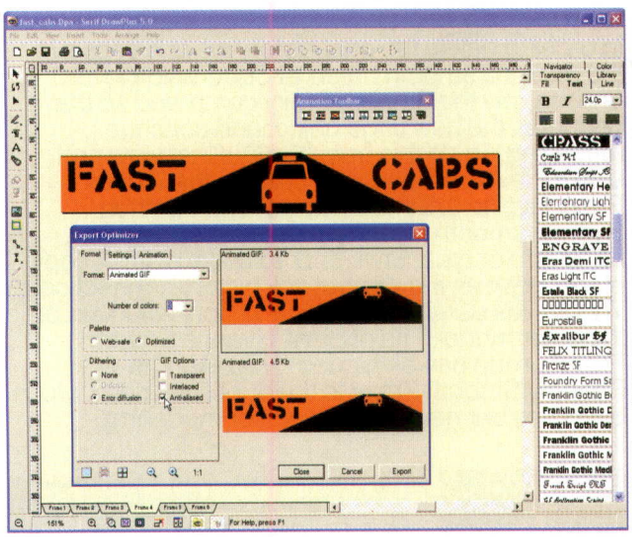


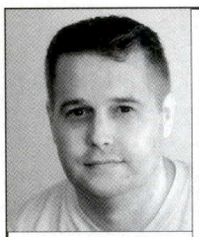

Maya File Edit Modify Create Display W
Maya 7.0: /Users/simon/Documents/ Magazine C
Modeling
View Shading Lighting Show Panels

32 JOINING THE EARS: The ear polygon edges are joined to the face using Append Polygon, cutting in extra geometry where necessary to make the divisions line up. The thickness of the rest of the ear is created by extruded the edges. Point editing is then done to reshape the ear. It doesn't need to be that precise.



33 THE FINISHING TOUCHES: Finally the ear hole is closed by selecting the edges and using the Fill Hole command. The model is completed by adding teeth modelled using polygon cubes that are edited to shape and smoothed, then a final Mirror Geometry operation can be done to finish off. ■





THE ARTIST

Chris Schmidt: Chris Schmidt has been designing and creating web content since the arrival of the first graphical browsers. After working with numerous design agencies for countless clients he now works freelance with many notable musicians among his client base. He is also a regular contributor to numerous graphic design and Internet magazines and an exclusive photographer for a leading stock photo library.

On the CD: Other than the software, no resources are necessary to complete this tutorial. However, you'll find the final fastcabs.gif animated gif on the CD along with the fast_cabs.dpa DrawPlus file which you can view in the software to see exactly how we've put things together.

Get started with DrawPlus 5

With a free copy of Serif DrawPlus 5.0 tucked away on this issue's free CD, you'll be keen to learn how to use it! Here we run through the process of creating an animated graphic utilising many of DrawPlus' key features

Bitmap image editing is undoubtedly the most popular method of working with digital imagery. But while the individual pixels that the raster method relies upon may provide the best format in which to display photo-realistic imagery, there are some obvious problems for other types of media.

Increasing the size of images or changing the resolution can have dramatic repercussions in terms of image quality and when you have a more universal graphic design project in mind, such as creating a brand identity or product design, you'll need to have the flexibility of being able to scale images freely without worrying about this type of degradation occurring.

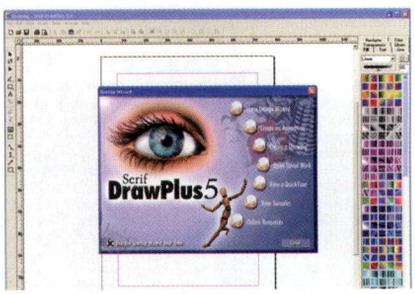
Working with vector graphics is the obvious solution to such a predicament, although this format requires some different techniques for creating such flexible artwork. Photoshop contains some fundamental vector options through its Pen, Shape and Text tools, but the controls are a stop-gap when compared with a dedicated vector illustration package such as Illustrator. But for occasional use, this is an expensive option that demands quite some time to master convincingly.

If this sounds like a familiar scenario, then your problems could all be over by installing the fully functional version of Serif DrawPlus 5 from the shiny disk stuck in the back of this very magazine.

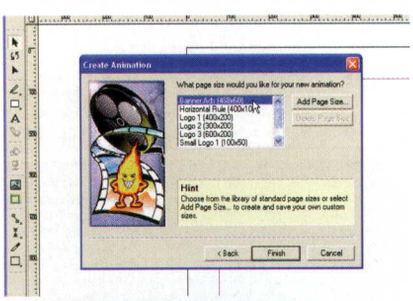
For the experienced illustrator, DrawPlus provides all the usual stroke and path controls you'll need for the creation of vector artwork, while the more novice artist will appreciate the plethora of templates, wizards and tutorials on offer. There's even alternative methods of controlling vector content that may be more sympathetic to those still to unravel the mysteries of the Bezier handle.

But DrawPlus is much more than just a vector application. The templates hint at just a few of the possibilities the software allows, with output to publishing supported through business stationary and leaflets. Web designers too have controls on hand that cater for the optimisation of graphical content.

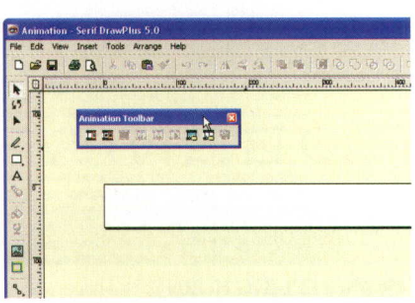
We can't cover everything the software has to offer in such a small space, but the following steps will run through the essential aspects of DrawPlus 5 as we create an animated banner ad and highlight just some of the hidden features the software has in store..



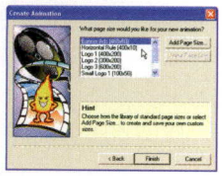
01 MEET THE SOFTWARE: On launching DrawPlus you'll be greeted by the Startup Wizard which provides access to many of DrawPlus' key modes. Much of this is self-explanatory but pay attention to the positioning of the toolbar to the left of the main canvas and the tabbed categories to the right.



02 GET STARTED: You have access to common icons along the top plus controls near the status bar. Return to the Startup Wizard and select Create An Animation to define the size of your project. Choose Banner Ads (468x60) and click Finish to create a canvas with the correct dimensions for a universal website banner ad.



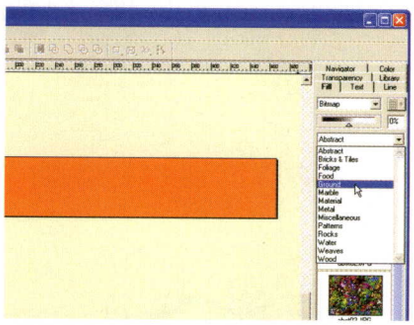
03 ANIMATION TOOLBAR: With the canvas open, drag the animation controls so they float freely. The current canvas will be frame 1 of your developing animation – look towards the bottom of the interface and you'll see the named tab to indicate this.



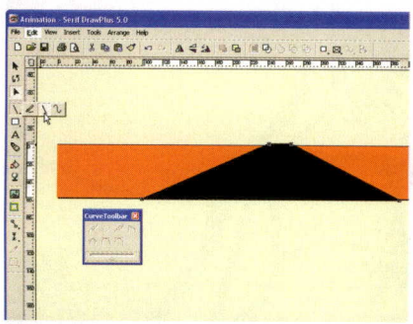
Animated GIFs

Because DrawPlus is a vector package, illustrations generated in their native form using the software cannot be posted online, as the internet primarily uses bitmap graphic formats (GIF and JPG). However, you can use the software to create artwork (such as logos etc) for online use but they will need exporting to the appropriate format using the File > Export dialogue settings.

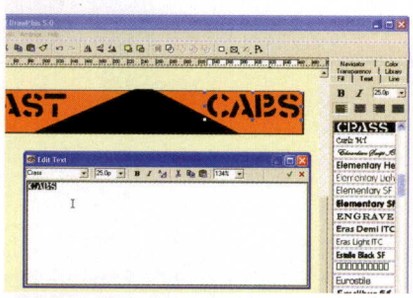
An animated GIF is a sequence of individual GIF images displayed sequentially. Unlike more complex Flash animations there is no need for additional coding when embedding an animated GIF into a web page. The browser will play back the image depending on the settings used when the file was created. DrawPlus makes it easy to create and export such content thanks to the Animation toolbar which covers all the controls necessary for the final effect.



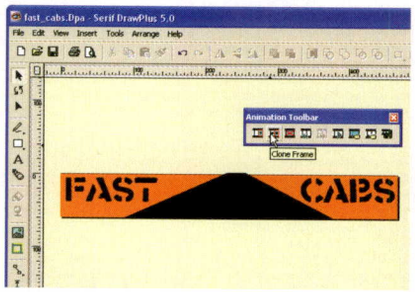
04 BUILDING THE BACKGROUND: Let's start by creating some background elements that will remain static throughout the duration of the animation. Drag a rectangle shape to fill the canvas and choose a colour or texture using the Fill or Colour tabs to the right of the interface.



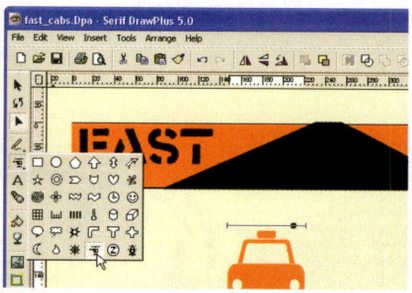
05 ROAD TO NOWHERE: The Curve Line tool will provide the most control for creating the road but an alternative option is the Freehand tool and adjustments can be made using the Node tool. You could also use the Straight Line tool, just be sure to click on previous anchor points to join together strokes.



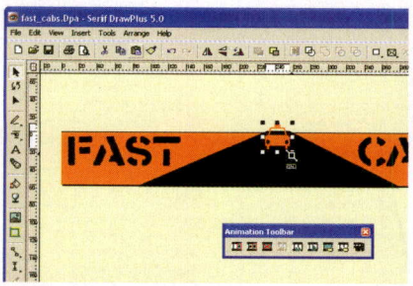
06 TEXTING: Add text by clicking on the canvas with the Text tool and type. Drag the text to scale it, use the Node tool to adjust leading and kerning, and align by shift clicking and go to Arrange > Align menu.



07 FRAME BY FRAME: Now we can think about adding frames onto which our animated content will appear. Turn to the Animation toolbar or reinstate it through the View > Toolbars and Tabs menu. Click five times on the Clone Frame button to give us six frames which can be accessed individually through the tabs at the foot of the canvas area.



08 A FAST CAB: Click on the Shape tools and add the helicopter shape to your canvas. Drag the anchor point in the line that appears above your shape and pick from the list of vehicles, next apply a fill or colour.

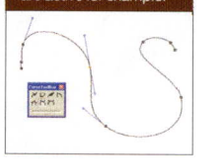


09 INTO POSITION: Make sure you have Frame 1 selected and position the cab towards the top of the road. The perspective dictates that the car should be small so, using the Pointer tool, click and drag a corner point of the car to change its size. Now select the shape and choose Edit > Copy before clicking on the Frame 2 tab.

Using paths and fills

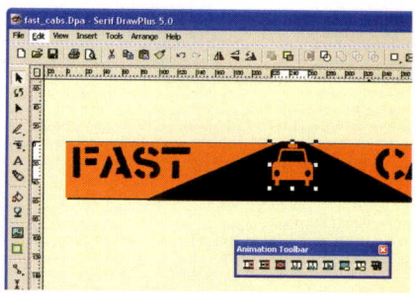
Vector graphics differ from bitmaps in various ways but one of the main points to consider is how content is created. Like Illustrator and Freehand, DrawPlus uses strokes and fills to create graphic objects. Strokes are effectively lines that define the perimeter of a shape while a fill dictates its content. Using the Freehand or the Curve Line tool you can create such objects which remain freely editable using the Node tool to make specific adjustment to the anchor points that constitute the actual shape.

DrawPlus may not be as powerful as its professional level competitors but there's more than enough to allow you to create some intricate content by combining such tools. Remember also that the Node tool provides a number of alternative functions for different types of objects. Leading and kerning can be adjusted when text is selected and shape variations are possible when predefined shapes are active for example.

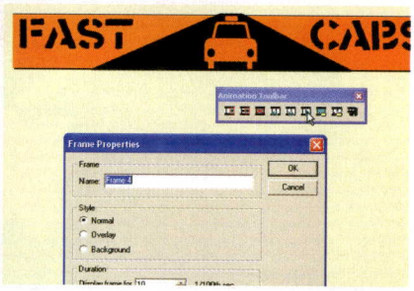


Drawing with Serif

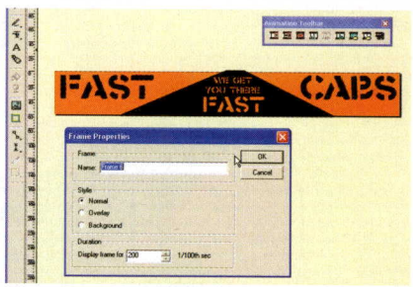
Serif DrawPlus 5 offers an extremely versatile set of drawing tools, which is perfect for those digital artists not quite ready to make the jump to a full-blown vector package like Illustrator. DrawPlus is the perfect option for web graphics, not least because of its ability to enable users export graphics at any resolution without any loss of clarity. On finishing this tutorial, familiarise yourself further with the software by making use of the program's wizards and attempting to recreate ad banners you find on the internet.



10 GET CLOSER: Frame 2 should have an empty road waiting for our cab. Hit Edit > Paste and move the pasted cab so it's in the same position as Frame 1. Move the cab down into the picture and increase the size to compensate for the car's perspective in its relative space to the road. Repeat the process for frames 3 and 4 to bring the car full into view.



11 FRAME PROPERTIES: Play back your animation using the controls from the Animation toolbar. If you feel it is too fast you can alter the duration of individual frames using the Frame Properties option.



12 COMPLETE THE EFFECT: To finish we added a catch line to the closing frames making adjustment to their duration. Select the Loop Continuously option and double check the final results using the Play controls to determine whether any last minute changes are necessary. Simple! ■

Eastern Promise

Learn the ancient secrets of oriental art as Faye Donohue shows you how to produce a captivating Japanese style vector illustration from a photo montage

THE ARTIST

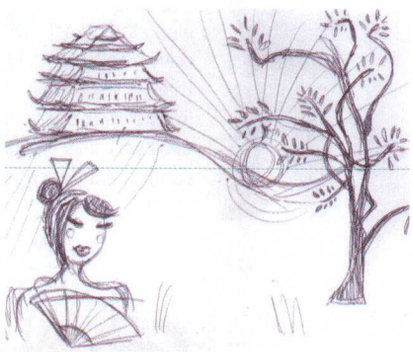
Faye Donohue: As a professional digital artist Faye Donohue favours Adobe Illustrator above all other programs as an essential tool for design work of all genres. Having had work published in many UK based magazines including the leading film title *DVD Review*, Faye has been creating digital art for over five years and is currently enjoying the new features to be found in the much loved CS2.

On the CD: Castle jpg, Flower.jpg. Geisha_girl.jpg, japan.jpg

From early ink drawings to more elaborately coloured paintings, the oriental style of illustration recognises beauty in form using simple lines and shapes in a suggestive manner. The minimalist edge of Japanese design is instantly recognisable and timelessly classic, ensuring it is perfectly suited to the vector illustration world of the 21st century.

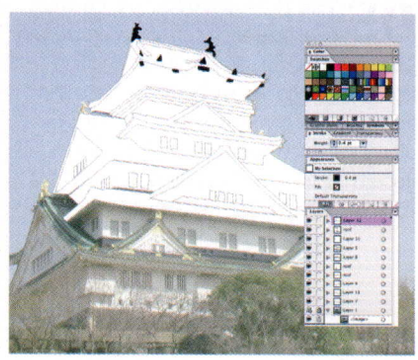
Illustrator CS is a versatile design package and widely used by digital artists both in and out of the creative industries. For some, it may seem like an application clearly restricted by the artistic ability of the individual, which in some ways can be true. However, there is no set rule that dictates that the user has to be able to draw to be capable of creating stunning vector artwork. Working with photographs and scans is not just the realm of Photoshop and other bitmap-based applications, allowing for vector elements of any complexity to be created with ease. Nearly all digital illustrators and graphic designers use some degree of base artwork to either trace or inspire, whether it be a photograph or hand drawn sketch - these provide a great starting pointing and constant visual reference as you work.

In this tutorial we will guide you through the process of taking an initial hand drawn sketch, a couple of photographs and use them as the base to create a Japanese themed illustration. From importing and utilising bitmap templates, through tracing and drawing using a wide array of Illustrator's universal vector techniques. Working with the Bezier Pen tool to map out intricate paths, handling layers and creating custom gradient fills by the end of the following pages you will have not only recreated this stunning composition you see before you, but with any luck will have picked up a few handy and re-usable techniques along the way to help you take your vector illustrations to the next level. So without further ado, simply open up Illustrator and say "Konishiwa" to the eastern promise of oriental art.

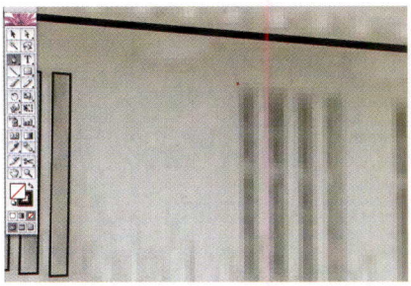


01 ON YOUR MARKS: After opening up Illustrator, create a new landscape orientated document. The size of the canvas is pretty much down to personal preference, but for the purposes of this tutorial we have decided upon standard A4 dimensions. Hide the Art board, and by selecting File > Place, import the image japan.jpg from the resource files which accompany this project. This sketch is the base from which the illustration will stem and essentially will be used as a guide. A good tip here is to lock this layer to avoid frustration when using selection tools later on.

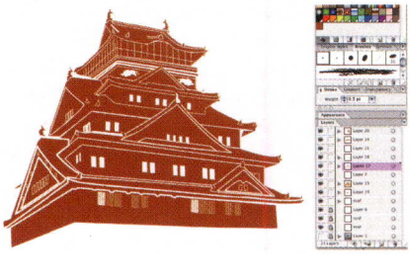
02 DRAWING THE TEMPLE: As we will be creating a montage from many different sources, we will need to work upon multiple documents. So, on another new document import castle.jpg from the CD and set it as a template layer. Dim the image to 50% opacity by double clicking the item in the Layers palette. Click the small box next to the layer to lock it. Now on a new layer, zoom into the top area and start by tracing the roof with the Bezier Pen, using a black 0.3pt stroke and no Fill. Ensure you work up close to the picture in order to stay true to the photo's outlines.



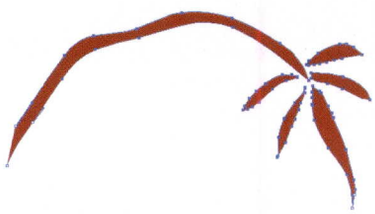
03 A TALL STOREY: Make sure when you are tracing that you include all the finer details of the artwork including the decorations, windows and all those extra elements that are not immediately apparent when first examining the image. To make the putting together the montage easier, we will trace different areas of the building onto different layers. When the first section is completed (the area shown in the image above), hide the layer from view, and on a new layer, start tracing once more, this time from the second storey downwards. »»



04 A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY: When it comes to tracing the windows, first draw one with the Bezier pen, copy and then paste it before moving the new one alongside it. Use this process to create all of the windows, copying and pasting the groups as you go along. Fill with a brown of about 50% magenta, 100% yellow and 50% black.

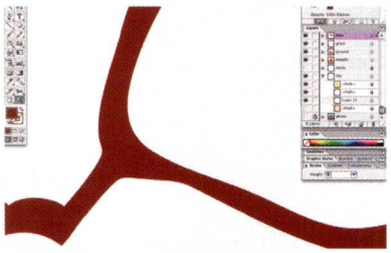


05 THE IMPORTANCE OF ORDER: To ensure each part of the temple is in the right order, organise the layers and sub layers as you go along or you may get a little frustrated with some parts getting hidden by others in front. When all the outlines have been traced give them a white stroke outline and fill each part with a burgundy colour.



06 TAKING ROOT: To break up the foreground and add further impact, our composition includes the gnarled branches of an old tree. Although complex to the eye, its structure is straightforward. Trace around the underlying sketch using the Pen tool. Don't worry about how smooth the path is, a rough and uneven edge is what you're looking for.

07 TAKING ROOT, CONTINUED...: With the main shape outline close to the path, apply a dark shade of brown to the stroke as well to the Fill. At this point you can utilise the Simplify function (Object > Path > Simplify) should your shape have too sharper corners. Similarly, should your tree look too smooth and rounded, add character by using the Add Anchor function (Object > Path > Add Anchor Points). Bring further nodes to the path, allowing for some finer tweaks.



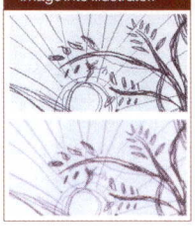
08 BRANCHING OUT: Add more branches to the tree by duplicating the original branch, position them and make slight alterations to their scale and orientation. You might need to make small changes to the outlining path using the Direct Selection tool, especially where branches sit in close proximity.

09 LEAF IT OUT: Now we need to add some foliage. Once again use the Pen tool to draw a simple shape to represent our first leaf. As you can see above, the shape used in this illustration is of a triangular origin but with a slight curve to it. Be sure to construct the shape as a closed path so as not to complicate the fill process later.

Sketching to scan

As with all artwork composition is the key, and as with all digital artwork preparation is vital so a neat trick is to illustrate directly from a hand drawn sketch. Getting back to basics with a blank piece of paper and a pen is a quick and easy way to experiment with how your final piece will sit on the page and once your happy with what you've got, all you have to do is scan it in.

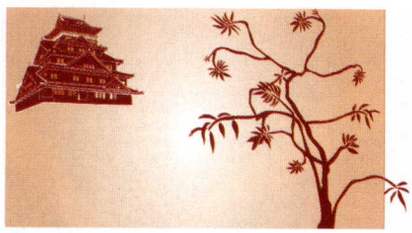
Scanning could well be described as an artless task. No matter how careful one may seem to be, getting a perfectly straight scan is just pretty damn unlikely. A quick solution to scanning nightmares is simple Photoshop. Simple tweaks to the adjust contrast, brightness and colour levels can instantly rescue a clearly useable sketch. A handy tip is to use Photoshop's Rotate function to straighten your scan prior to importing the image into Illustrator.



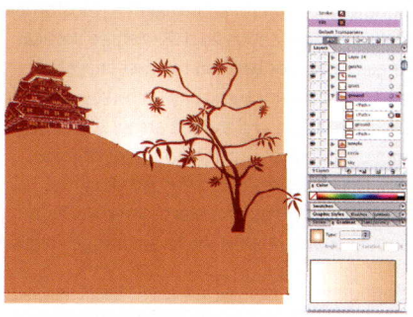
10 LEAFY PALMS: When you're happy with the shape, select a suitable colour for the fill a lighter shade of the branch works well for subtle contrast. Position this first leaf trailing from your first branch and then with the leaf selected, duplicate it by holding the 'Alt' key and repositioning the leaf with the mouse just to the left of the original.

11 A LEAF ENCOUNTER : Repeat this process until you have four leaves along the branch, incrementally reducing the scale by a fraction. With all four selected, hold the 'Alt' key and position the duplicate leaves just below the branch. Use the Reflect tool to flip it vertically and nudge it into place, to compliment the opposing edge of the leaf.

12 TURN OVER A NEW LEAF: Repeat the previous process, putting leaves on each branch, but vary the shapes you draw. You may like to try filling the spaces with alternate variations of the first leaf but don't go over board. Apply rotations, skews, horizontal and vertical mirroring to the new leaves to disguise the duplication method.



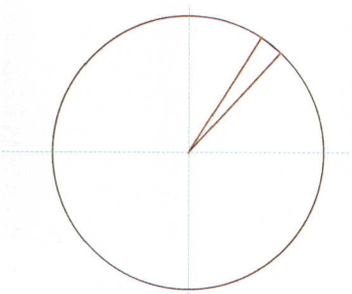
13 THE SKY'S THE LIMIT: To add a sky to the picture simply draw a rectangle over the area which will be the background and fill with a radial gradient going from a soft brown to white. Make sure it goes onto a new layer, as this will be important when we add other elements to it.



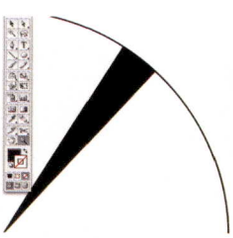
14 GROUND FORCE: Start with a new layer and name it 'Ground'. Next, draw a curved hillside shape that covers the bottom of the temple, making sure it dips in at the centre. Fill the layer with the same brown you used to fill in the temple's windows, placing it in front of the temple layer.

15 HERE COMES THE SUN: Make use of gradient fills and layer effects to create the suggestion that the sun is present, without actually drawing it. On a new layer, draw a circle using the Shape tool, about the same width as the temple will do, and position it in the sky to the right of the temple. The height at which you place the sun in the sky is a definitive indicator of the time of day.

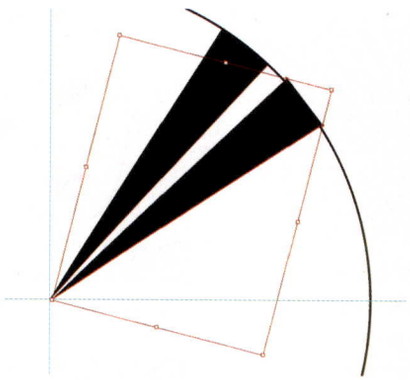
16 SHEDDING LIGHT: With the circle in position, it's time to bring in some light. Select the circle and switch its outline stroke to transparent, it's all about the fill. Choose an off-white with 15% yellow, and apply an outer glow (Effects > Stylize > Outer Glow) of around 10. Don't worry if the result looks a little questionable, we're not finished!



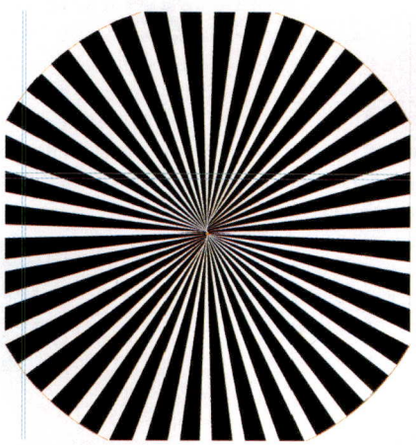
17 CREATING THE SUNBEAM: Ok, so the sun is in place but the sky still looks a little flat. Let's bring it to life. On a separate document draw a circle whilst holding 'Shift' on the keyboard, and using Smart guides (View > Smart Guides) create a cross hair in the centre of it. Using the Bezier Pen draw a slim triangular segment.



18 A SLICE OF PIE: To duplicate this we need to use Actions. Actions exist in Illustrator as well as Photoshop, and can be quite useful for creating images that require a lot of duplication. Open the Actions window and click on the Create New Action icon, which is located at the bottom of the window.



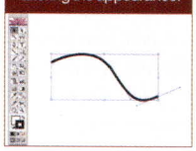
19 PUT INTO ACTION: Name your new action appropriately and select an Action Key of your own preference you may want to use one of the F Keys for this. Press record, select the first triangle segment and copy and paste it in front. Now with the duplicate, go to Object > Transform > Rotate and by moving the segment appropriately, you will set the angle and distance each segment will be apart. Set the angle to -9 and press Ok.

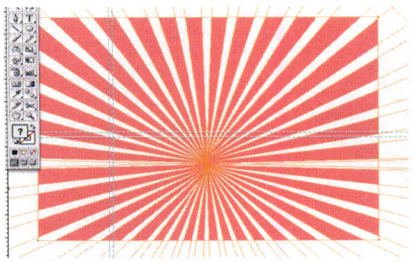


20 TIME TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE: To move the point of the segment into the centre, zoom right in and move the tip into the centre. Use the guides to make this easier. To repeat this process, press your action Hot Key and do the same each time until you have reached a semi circle. Select all, then group together and copy, rotating 180 degrees to create the remaining half of the circle. Voila! You now have your sunbeam image. Your final task is to save the file and then make any personal adjustments »»

Meet the pen tool

For vector novices, one of the most fundamental tasks is to get to grips with using the Bezier pen, and in particular, learning the technique of creating curves. It is a tool that uses a system of nodes and control points to define curves and create straight lines. Clicking and dragging with the Bezier Pen initially seems counter-intuitive, but once you are familiar with the technique, it soon becomes an extremely effective method of drawing paths of any form. The handles operate as tangents to the curve, not crossing it but acting as a surface off which the curve bounces. The points should be placed at positions where the curve changes direction. One thing to keep in mind though when you're clicking away is that more points doesn't necessary mean more prizes. The more points in your image, the greater the file size is going to be. If you want to reduce the size of the file, select Object > Path > Simplify. By reducing the number of points ever so slightly even in a complex object can drop the file size without altering the appearance.





21 A TOUCH OF COLOUR: Once all of the segments cover up the circle shape, group them together so you are left with the editable base circle and a group of segments. Select the circles and change their colour to a bright red. Draw a rectangle the same size as the sky and create a clipping mask over it. Position it behind the sky layer so that the centre point lies on the horizon

22 THE BLENDING OF LAYERS: A key technique, which adds depth and feel of an illustration, is layer blending. Switch the blending mode of the sky layer to multiply allowing the underlying texture to show through. Altering the opacity of this layer and the one beneath will hide parts without the need to remove them.

23 GEISHA GIRL: Import the sketch Geisha_girl.jpg and lock it as a template layer with 50% opacity. The pen stroke is visible. Make a new layer, and zoom in. Draw around the head with the Bezier Pen using a black stroke of 0.3pt with no fill.

24 A SPOT OF DETAIL: Once the head is finished, start adding the finer details such as the eyes and mouth. You may want to add these onto a new layer so things do not get muddled later on when you have many more layers. Try adding some flesh coloured shading for extra definition

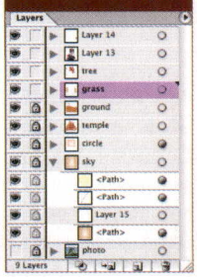
25 A STYLISH CUT: Start a new layer named 'Hair' and begin drawing round the hair shapes. Hide the previous layer to make it easier to see the sketch. To do this click the eye symbol on the layer in the Layers palette. On the fringe, add a 2pt white stroke so that the separation is visible.

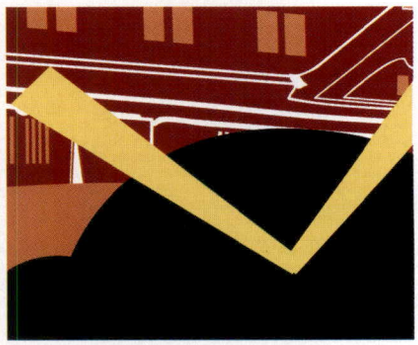
26 BODY SHAPE: Next move onto the neck and shoulders portion of the sketch. Start on a new layer, this time naming it 'Body' and draw the outline of the neck and shoulders, cutting it off at the bottom with a straight line. Hide this layer, and start a new layer for the clothing. Draw each shape separately and make sure the part closest to her neck overlaps the next, and so on. Fill each part with a different colour going from bright pink to black, through to light pink.

The layer cake

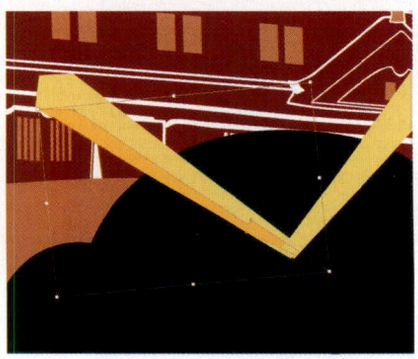
A crucial task when creating a number of different images or elements in one document is keeping your layers organised. This may seem a laborious task at first, but it will save a lot of time later on. It is extremely important to also name your layers as you are creating them, as you don't want to be scanning endlessly through a long list trying to find one item that may have got lost or hidden due to something being on top of it.

The stacking order of artwork in a document window corresponds to the hierarchy of the items in the Layers palette. Artwork in the top layer in the Layers palette is at the front of the stacking order, while artwork in the bottom layer in the Layers palette is at the back of the stacking order. There are also sub-layers within these layers in which the objects are additionally stacked hierarchically.

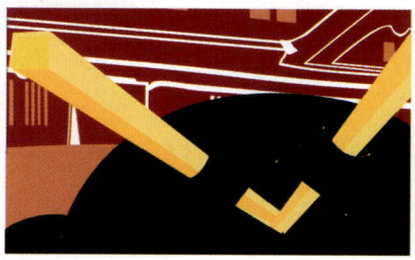




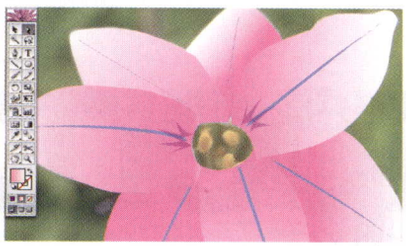
27 CHOP SUEY: Now it's time to decorate the Geisha's hair. Draw one triangle shape that represents a chopstick and fill with a yellow colour. Copy and paste another one and then hit Object > Transform > Reflect before choosing a 90 degree vertical angle. Now click back on the first chopstick and duplicate another copy on top by pressing 'Alt, '>' and the left arrow key then move into place by pressing the right arrow key. Now set this layer blend mode in the transparency dialogue box to Multiply. This should change the shade to an orange colour.



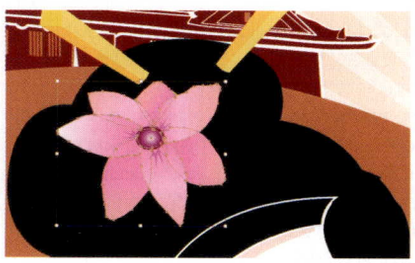
28 DEFINING THE SHAPE: Using the Bezier Pen tool, add a new node in the centre of the top line. Hover the Bezier over the top of the right hand corner and you'll notice that a small minus symbol will appear. Click this point to instantly remove the node. This will leave you with a triangle shape that appears to have been cut in half. Choose the Shape tool from the toolbox and use it to carefully draw a small square shape. To complete the effect, proceed to line this shape up over the top of the two triangle shapes so that it forms the top of the Geisha's hair decoration.



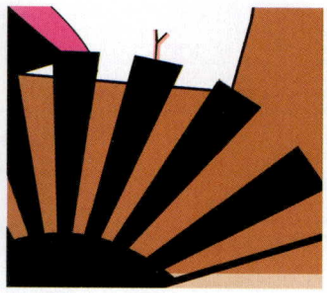
29 COVERING UP: To convey that the chopsticks are in her hair, use the Bezier Pen to draw a black square shape and place hiding the bottom point of each chopstick. Copy and paste for the second one and rotate. Make sure the layer order goes Black shape, Chopstick and then Hair.



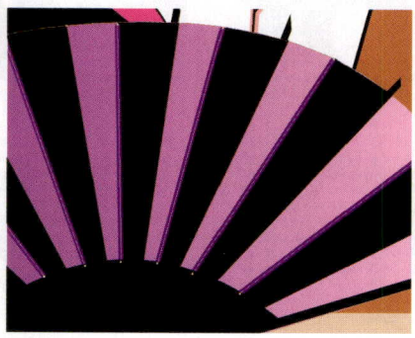
30 FLORAL DECOR: Import flower.jpg, and set the layer as a template and dim to 50%. Trace the shape using the Pen tool, starting with the petals. Create a gradient with dark magenta on one side, graduating through to a lighter shade, tweak the angle each time so that the darkest shades are towards the centre of flower. Draw a circle with a purple to white Gradient fill.



31 SHRINKING VIOLET: Go to your flower image and group the layers together, then copy and paste it into the main document. You may need to shrink the image down to fit onto the Geisha, so press 'Shift' and click and drag a corner on the Bounding box to rescale. Place on top of the chopsticks.



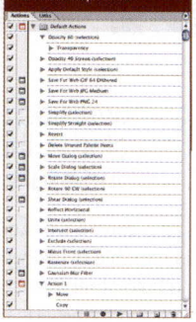
32 FANNING OUT: To draw the fan, place a point with the Bezier Pen on the left hand corner, and click on the right hand side and then to the centre, anchoring a curve as you go. Click again to the right corner, doing the same action, leaving you with a semi circle. Carry on with the Bezier Pen to draw the straight lines at the bottom, joining the last one and fill with a gradient that graduates from a dark purple to pink.



33 DECORATE THE FAN: In a similar way to creating the sunbeams, draw some triangular slices to form the folds in the fan. Draw a smaller semi circle at the base of the fan and fill with black. To decorate further, draw a black line with a 6pt stroke at the top of each triangular section.

Action Stations

By creating an action, you can instruct Illustrator to record a series of commands, including any specified values, tools and palettes you may use, in the order you use them. When recording an action, keep in mind that playback results depend on certain variables such as the current fill and stroke colours. Not every command in Illustrator can be recorded however. Unrecordable commands include those that change your view of the screen, commands that display or hide palettes, and commands in the Effect menu. In addition, the Glyphs palette and handy tools such as the Gradient and Mesh tools, Eyedropper, Paint Bucket, and Scissors are not actually recordable. If you have many different Actions, it's quite an intelligent idea to get organised and create sets in which to place and save them. You can easily organise sets of actions for different types of work, for example print or multimedia work and transfer these sets to other computers.



34 SHADOW CASTING: Duplicate the tree layer and move it to the layer beneath the original. It's worth noting that as we've positioned the sun quite low in the sky, the shadows must be both long and soft to create a natural appearance. Using the Reflect tool, flip the duplicate vertically, positioning the base of the trunk in continuation with the original. Apply a Gaussian blur of around 5pix to soften the edges, and drop the layer's opacity to 20%.

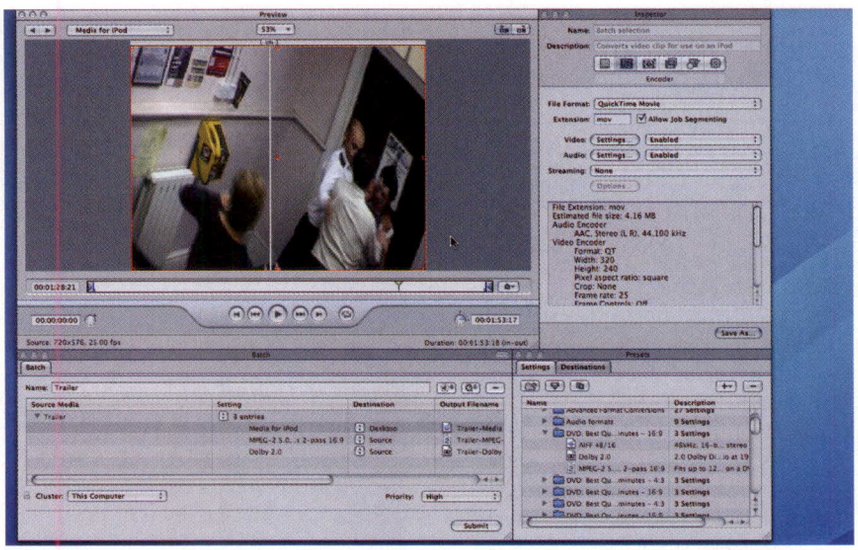
35 FOLLOWING THE LIGHT: Assuming your tree is not in perfect alignment with the sun, the shadow must be tweaked to follow the natural path of the light. With the layer selected, use the Shear tool, and manipulate the base of the bounding box up and to the right. The trick here is to draw an imaginary line up the trunk of your tree's shadow to meet the sun, and angle the shade to follow the projection.

36 FINISHING TOUCHES: To frame the Geisha girl, we are going to add some tufts of grass around her. These can be drawn freehand or chosen from the many examples on offer in the nature category of the Symbols palette. As further decoration, duplicate the flower from the Geisha's hair, change the colour , and place it on her. ■

THE ARTIST

Steve Paris: Steve Paris is a Bristol-based filmmaker. He founded Amazon Films with his wife and together they produce commissioned work, as well as shooting and editing their own short and feature-length films. He is also a freelance writer and trainer specialising in Apple's professional applications. He can be contacted at steve@amazonfilms.net

Resources: To complete this tutorial you will need a copy of Compressor, which comes bundled with Final Cut Pro and DVD Studio, in addition to any clip of digital video you can lay your hands upon.



Instant Expert: Compressor

Apple bundles a compression application with Final Cut Pro and DVD Studio Pro aptly named Compressor. With version 2, the application has been completely revamped. This tutorial will introduce you to its wonderful workings and many uses

Compressor is a video conversion application. This means that it is capable of taking a source media file and creating copies in multiple other formats, some suited for the web, others for DVD and others for broadcast.

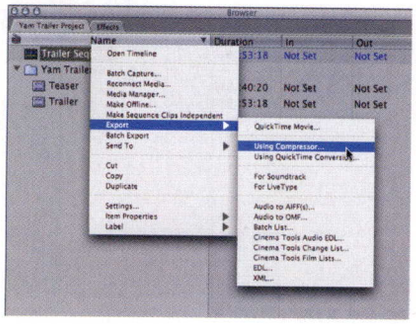
This application was recently updated to version 2 and came with a host of new features without affecting the program's simple usability. One of the massive advantages of Compressor is that it comes with dozens of preset settings enabling you to start converting your files in minutes with excellent results. Those presets are so good that by and large, you'll find them to be perfect for your needs and you may well not need to tweak them in any way.

However, if you wish to get technical, it is incredibly easy to modify those bundled settings or even create your own presets and use these instead of Apple's own, should you so desire it. You can create them using the Presets window and the Inspector window grants you access to all changeable parameters.

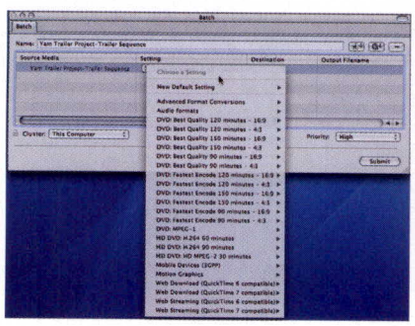
This tutorial is designed to introduce you to Compressor's interface and will guide you through two stages: the first seven steps will show you how to use the bundled presets to convert video to MPEG-2 for output to DVD. The second part of this tutorial will explore the creation of a simple new preset designed to help you convert your footage to a format suitable for Apple's new video-capable iPod. Of course, QuickTime Pro already has a 'Movie to iPod' export option, but the conversion process is very slow and you have absolutely no control over it. Compressor will give you that control.

There is a lot more to Compressor than this tutorial can show, however. With that in mind, we'll also be offering a few glimpses of some of its other tools through six small features peppered throughout these four pages. They'll hopefully give you an idea of the underlying power and usefulness of this application.

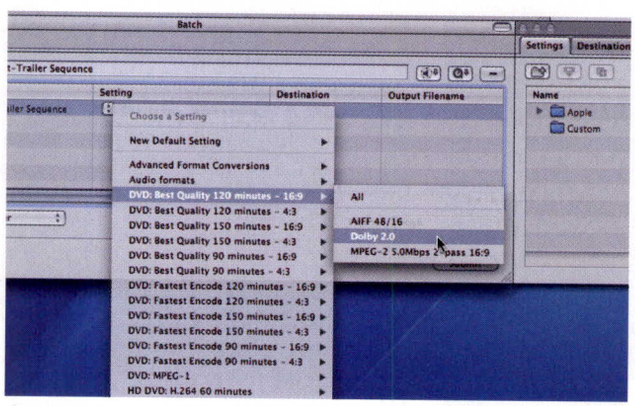
You will need to use some of your own video footage for this tutorial as DV files do not easily fit onto this issue's jam-packed free CD.



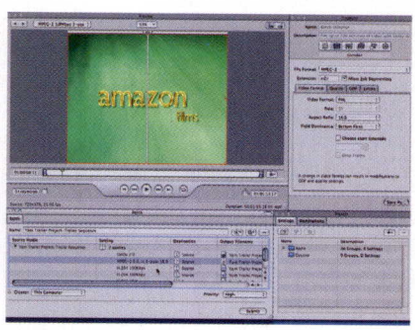
01 IMPORT INTO COMPRESSOR: Apple's pro video applications are well integrated. For instance, you may be working on a sequence in Final Cut Pro, which you are happy with and want to compress for the web or DVD. Simply control-click on it in the File browser and select Export >Compressor from the contextual menu. This will launch Compressor and that sequence will appear there ready to be compressed.


Batch
Yam Trailer Project-Trailer Sequence
Source Media
Setting
Destination
Output Filename
Choose a Setting
New Default Setting
Advanced Format Conversions
Audio formats
DVD: Best Quality 120 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Best Quality 120 minutes - 4:3
DVD: Best Quality 150 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Best Quality 150 minutes - 4:3
DVD: Best Quality 90 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Best Quality 90 minutes - 4:3
DVD: Fastest Encode 120 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Fastest Encode 120 minutes - 4:3
DVD: Fastest Encode 150 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Fastest Encode 150 minutes - 4:3
DVD: Fastest Encode 90 minutes - 16:9
DVD: Fastest Encode 90 minutes - 4:3
DVD: MPEG-1
HD DVD: H.264 60 minutes
HD DVD: H.264 90 minutes
HD DVD: HD MPEG-2 30 minutes
Mobile Devices (3GPP)
Motion Graphics
Web Download (QuickTime 6 compatible)
Web Download (QuickTime 7 compatible)
Web Streaming (QuickTime 6 compatible)
Web Streaming (QuickTime 7 compatible)
Cluster:
This Computer
Priority:
High
Submit

02 SETTING SELECTION: Compressor is composed of four main windows. Bottom left is the Batch window where our imported sequence appears in the Source media section. To select a compression parameter, simply click on the Setting pull down menu to the right of the Source media. This menu gives you access to all available parameters, enabling you to format your footage for the web or DVD.



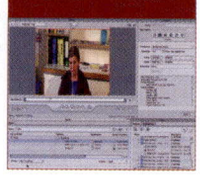
03 EXPLORE DVD SETTINGS: DVD media is split up between audio and video. Compressor 2 can now handle both natively. Your video and audio are compressed and saved as two separate files which you can then use in your DVD projects with DVD Studio Pro. Compressor's settings are divided into time-based folders: the more media is placed on the DVD, the higher the compression. Select the right one for you based on that criteria.



04 SELECT MULTIPLE SETTINGS: One advantage of Compressor is the ability to select multiple settings for a single media source. That way, you could for instance compress your audio and video media for your DVD projects as well as multiple versions for the Internet in one go. All you have to do is click on the Setting's menu again and select another parameter. You can repeat this action as often as you wish.

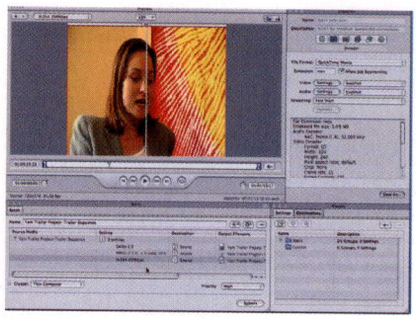
Distributed processing

Changing formats can often become a very processor intensive activity depending on which format you are migrating to. Depending on your computer's CPU, it could take you hours just to convert a few seconds of footage. Which is why Apple has introduced the revolutionary Distributed Processing. Using Apple's Qmaster application you can simply select and configure multiple computers with ease. This option actually allows one Mac to harness the power of multiple computers on a network, as long as they have Compressor 2 and/or Qmaster 2 installed. If the compression process takes too long for a single Mac to perform, it'll have access to unused CPU time on the other networked machines, which will speed up the laborious process dramatically.

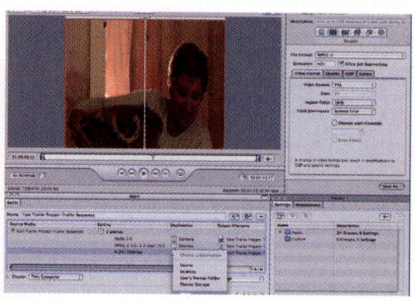


Expert Tip. Frame controls

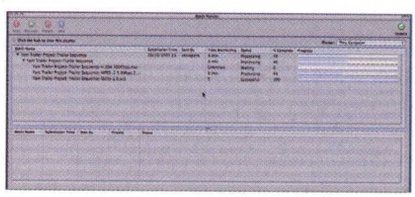
Compressor 2's advanced image conversions require advanced image analysis tools. Beneath the preset's name and description is a row of six icons. The third one from the left is the Frame Controls option. Selecting Custom from the Frame Controls menu enables you to have some degree of control over the quality of the output. Be aware though that increasing the quality from the default Fast options will greatly increase the time Compressor will need to do its job – maybe that's why the Distributed Processing was added to Compressor'.



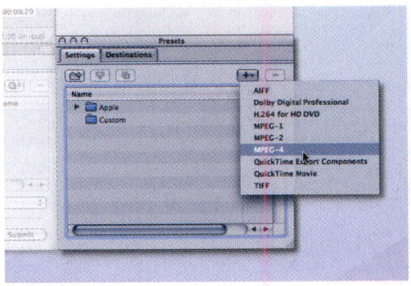
05 CHANGE YOUR ORDER: Each sub menu from the Settings panel has an All option. Enabling you to choose every parameter available for a specific option. But if you've selected too many, getting rid of them is very straightforward: highlight them in the Batch window and hit the delete key.



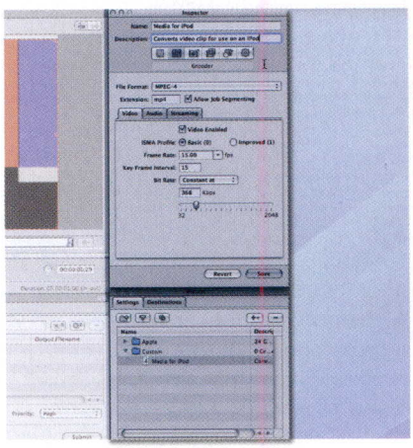
06 FINAL DESTINATION: You can choose a destination for each of your settings. The default choice is to place the compressed copy in the same folder as the original. However, quick links are available from the Destination menu to your Desktop or movie folders. You can of course also choose any folder or location you find appropriate.



07 LET COMPRESSOR DO THE WORK: You can now rename the file (file names are an amalgam of the original file's name with details of the compression rate) double-click on the name to edit it. Click on Submit (bottom right of the Batch window). This will action will take you into Batch monitor where you can check the progress of all your compression requests.»»



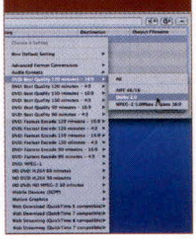
08 CREATE A PRESET: Now let's move back to Compressor and explore its vast customisation capabilities. To the right of the Presets window (bottom right) are two buttons. Click on '+' to create a new preset. A drop down menu appears. As we are creating a preset to enable our footage to play on an iPod, select MPEG-4 from the choices offered to you.

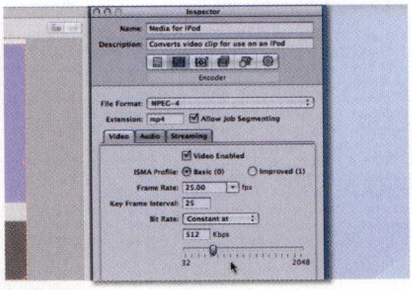


09 READY FOR INSPECTION: A new 'Untitled MPEG-4' preset appears in the Presets' Custom folder and its settings are immediately available in the Inspector window (top right). Let's start by renaming our preset. In Inspector, change the name field to "Media for iPod" and description to 'Converts video clip for use on an iPod'. Notice that as you change the setting's name in Inspector, that change is automatically reflected in the Presets window. Also, anytime something is changed on a preset, Inspector's save button (bottom right of the window) becomes active, allowing you to easily save your changes.

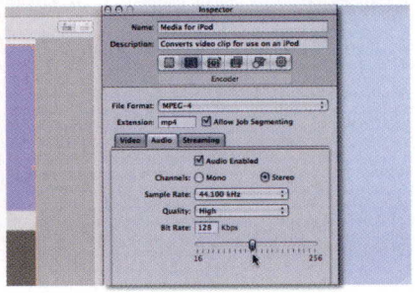
Friendly warning

As you work with Compressor you may find yourself creating different versions of the same file, each with slightly different settings from the other. Even though Compressor automatically names the files based on the original's name and the preset used, you might end up creating a conversion process with a target file name similar to one that already exists. As the compression process is automatic once the order has been submitted, the last thing you'd want is to come back hours later to find your Mac asking you if you'd wish to overwrite an existing file. Which is why Compressor brings up an alert icon next to your file in the Batch window immediately, letting you quickly notice the potential error and deal with it before you leave the room.

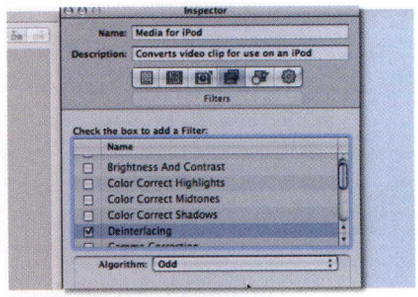




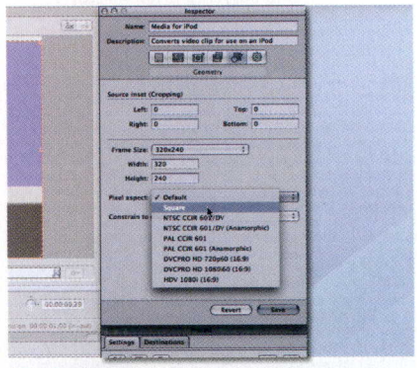
10 CONFIGURE VIDEO: The Inspector window has a series of small icons underneath the preset Description field. These six icons lead to various parts of the preset's capabilities. By default, it opens up in the Encoder section (second from the left), which is where we'll start our customisation. The Encoder settings are divided into three tabs, the first being Video. Change the Frame Rate to 25fps (if your footage is in PAL, 29.97 if it's NTSC); Keyframe Interval to 25 (or 29.97) and the Bit Rate to 512 or above.



11 CONFIGURE AUDIO: Next, select the Audio tab. Most of the default settings suit our current needs: the sound is in Stereo, Sample Rate is at 44.1kHz and the Quality is set to High. We could however increase the bit rate to something better. Click on the slider and increase it to 128kbps or above by dragging it to the right.



12 ADD FILTER: If the footage you are converting for viewing on an iPod was originally created for television, it will have to be de-interlaced to create a smooth image for your computer screen. Click on the Filters button (fourth from the left) to access all available filters. The one of interest to us right now is called Deinterlacing. Tick its box and leave its default settings as they are.

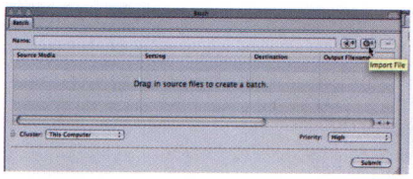


13 APPLY GEOMETRY: Inspector's penultimate button is called 'Geometry'. Click on it to define your media file's screen size. According to Apple's web site, the maximum size for an MPEG-4 file should be 320 x 240 which happens to be the selected default size for our preset. The only option we need to change is the Pixel Aspect, which should be set to Square. Click on Inspector's Save button.

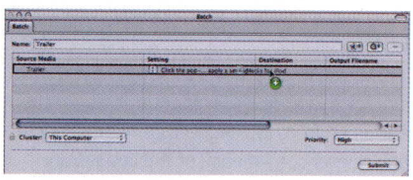
Surround sound import

Prior to Version 2, Compressor could not convert audio unless it was to AIFF and it wasn't anything more advanced than stereo. Anything else and you needed to use a separate application called A.Pack.

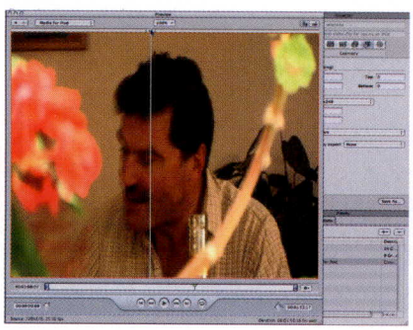
Full audio conversion is handled straight from Compressor 2 including advanced compressions like AC3 for DVDs. It even offers support for surround sound. To the right of the Batch window is a series of three buttons. To the left is the Import surround sound group option. Clicking on this summons a graphical window over the Batch window. To create your surround sound, simply drag your sound files over the appropriate speakers straight from the Finder.



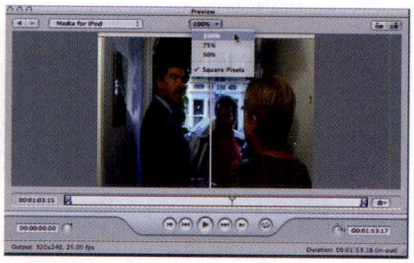
14 IMPORT FILE: Files can be imported in other ways than from within Final Cut Pro (as in Step 1). Top right of the Batch window are three buttons. The middle one which has a tiny QuickTime logo within it is your 'Import file' button. Click on it and choose the file you wish to work with. Alternatively, you could simply drag your file directly from the Finder onto the Batch window.



15 ADD PRESET: Adding a custom preset can be done as in Step 2 – all custom presets appear at the end of the list. However, there is another way to add presets to media: find them in the Presets window and drag them to the Batch window. The advantage here is that you can select multiple presets and drag them all at once onto your selected media file at the same time.

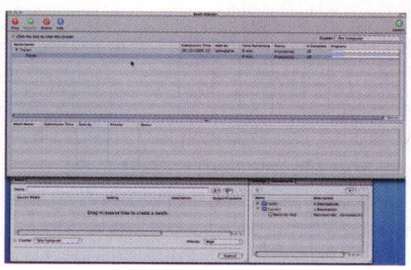


16 PREVIEW WINDOW: In the Batch window, click on the 'Media for iPod' setting and notice the Preview screen changing from the default colour bars to a frame split by a white line. This line shows you the difference between the source material and how it will look like when compressed. The picture shows you the interlaced original, left, next to the slightly blurry but de-interlaced compressed output.

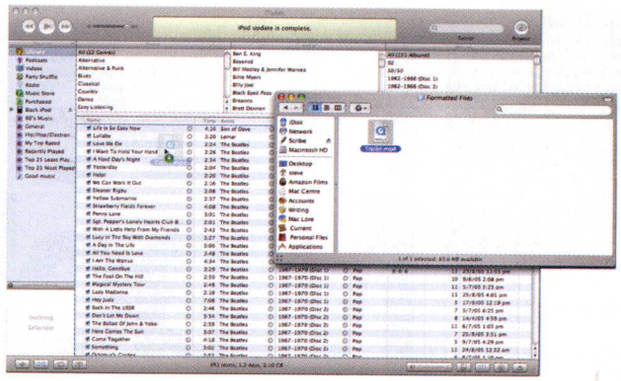


17 SWITCH SIZES: The blurriness mentioned previously is due to the compressed file being smaller than the original and the window is set to the original's size. To view your footage in the output size, click the button in the top right of the preview window. These two buttons toggle between the source and setting's size. Toggling between sizes doesn't resize the window's dimension. In order to see the actual size of your clip, click on the middle button and choose 100%.

18 CREATE A DESTINATION: By default, Compressor gives you a number of choices when it comes to choosing where to save your file. In order to add to that list: select the Preset window's Destination tab. Click on '+' to create a new local destination. Browse your hard drive and choose the appropriate folder. An untitled destination is created, rename it using Inspector. Either drag it from the Presets window or choose it from the Batch window's pop-up menu.



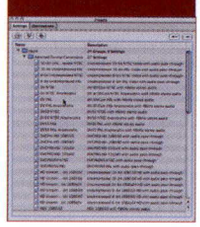
19 SUBMIT COMPRESSION: Our media is ready to be converted. Click on the Batch window's Submit button to launch Batch monitor. The Source media is removed from the Batch window and appears in Batch monitor. The process is automatic although you can stop or delete the process.

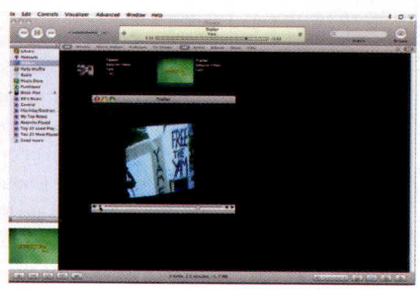


20 IMPORT INTO ITUNES: To import your file onto an iPod, you first need to add it to iTunes. Launch iTunes 6 and drag the file from the Finder to your library. Go to File > Get info, to add any extra information to your clip that will make it easier to catalogue.

PAL to NTSC and back again

One of Compressor 2's most interesting new features is its support for format conversion. This feature enables you to transcode your footage into many different formats using advanced image analysis. One of its most useful features is the ability to convert media between PAL and NTSC video formats. However, Compressor 2 also gives you the ability of up-converting standard definition (SD) footage into high definition (HD) and down-converting HD to SD. These format conversions are incredibly time consuming and this is where distributed processing comes into its own. However, this is an incredibly useful feature to have if you are planning to market your footage in different countries or have SD and HD footage which you would like to use in a single project.

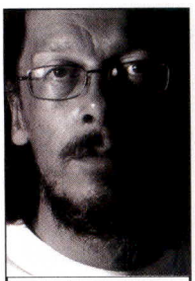




21 PLAYBACK: Playing the file back is as simple as double-clicking on your clip in iTunes' library or videos sections. To see it play in full size, click on that window and your clip will appear in a separate window. All that's left to do now is to sync up your 5th generation iPod and take your films with you.

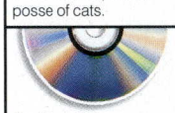
Working with droplets

Once you have found or created the correct presets for your workflow, you might find it a chore having to go back to Compressor to import your footage, select your presets, choose a destination and submit your batch. If that's the case, you'll like Droplets. Compressor 2 gives you the ability to save a preset as an app. Select a preset and go to File > Save as droplet... When complete, drag a media file onto that Droplet so you can compress your footage.



THE ARTIST

Tim Shelbourne: After working for more than 20 years as an artist and illustrator, Tim Shelbourne turned to digital image making after his first encounter with an early version of Photoshop. Tim has been appointed as an Adobe beta tester and has written several books on his craft. He now lives in leafy Lincolnshire with his wife, an irrepressible Jack Russell terrier, and a posse of cats.



On the CD: Main figure: android start.jpg

istock images: (www.istockphoto.com)
Machine1 image: ref: 53781
Machine2 image: ref: 245678
Spring image: ref: 517976
Wave image: ref: 351970

Rise of the Machines

Get ready to enter a new world of science fiction glamour as Tim Shelbourne demonstrates how to create a classic fantasy android effect using Adobe Photoshop CS2

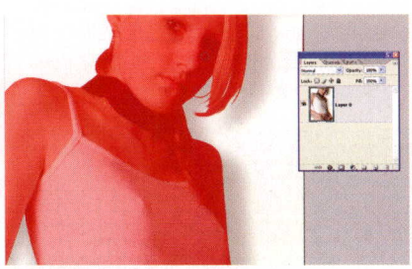
Robots and androids are an enduring fascination for mankind, and continue to feature in some of the most iconic comic book images and memorable films of our time. This fascination perhaps stems from an innate fear that technology will ultimately become more powerful than mankind itself, and that one day machines will rule us, rather than we ruling them.

In the tradition of great robot fantasy, we're creating our own android by using Photoshop CS2. This is truly an exercise in using Photoshop to create the kind of seamless, hyper-real composite image for which the software itself was originally developed. With careful and pixel-accurate use of layer masks, we can convincingly blend a number of image elements together to form a convincing new whole. We'll use the impressive Lighting Effects filter to give the android figure a real sense of depth and form. Some simple shading, added via a Multiply Layer adds an extra touch of modelling.

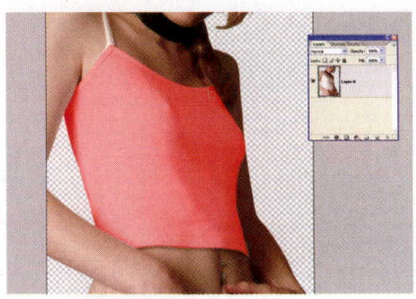
On this issue's free CD-ROM, you'll see that we've supplied you with the main image of the figure for this exercise. Incidental shots for the mechanical details can be sourced from iStockphoto.com for a couple of dollars a piece. The image references for each of the images are listed here, so you can either purchase the same ones from iStock or shoot some of your own. The mechanical parts you use really don't have to be anything specific, just interesting looking metal parts, after all who of us really know how a true to life android would be made?

There's a lot here for you to get your teeth into, including some techniques that are the very bedrock of successful Photoshop use. Not only will you have the opportunity here to produce an eye catching image, but you'll gain knowledge of techniques you'll use over and over again.

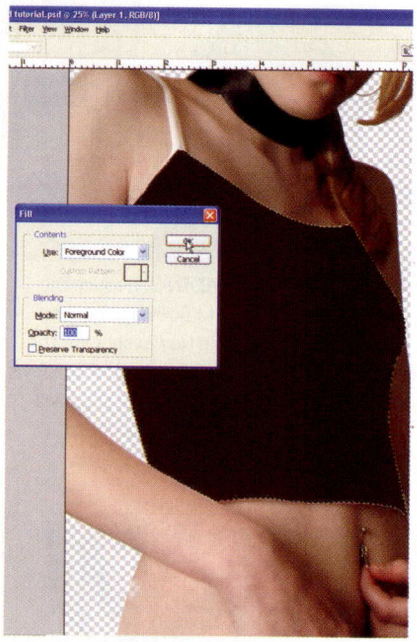
01 SMOOTH SKIN: Open "android_start.jpg" from the CD and go to Layer > Duplicate Layer. To begin smoothing the skin, go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Use a Blur Radius of 7 pixels and click OK. In the layers palette, set the Blending mode for this layer to Lighten. Choose the Eraser tool and set the tool Opacity to 50% in the Options bar. Use the Eraser over the main facial features to sharpen them. Go to Layer > Merge Down.



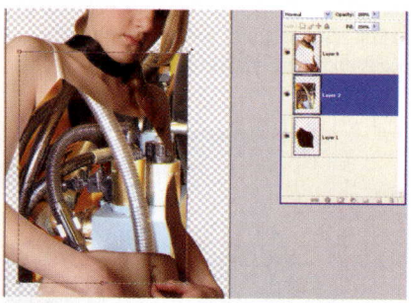
02 ISOLATE THE FIGURE: In the Layers Palette, double-click the image thumbnail on the Background Layer, and then hit 'Q' to enter Quick Mask mode. Choose the Brush tool and a hard round tip from the Brush picker. Ensure that your foreground colour is set to black and paint a mask over the entire figure, taking care to keep exactly to the figure's outline. Hit 'Q' again to exit Quick Mask mode and generate a selection. Hit the backspace key to clear the unwanted background area.



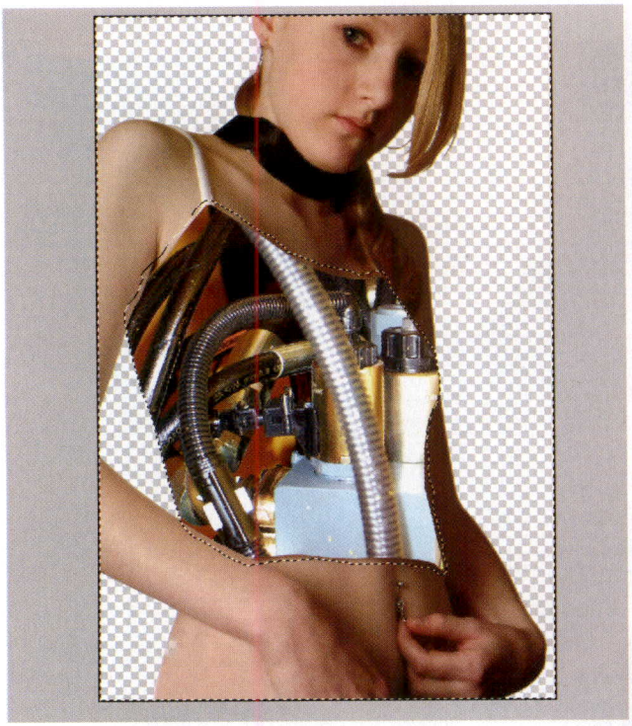
03 FIRST CUT: Hit 'Ctrl' & 'D' to deselect. Now, to create the opening in the chest, hit 'Q' to enter Quick Mask mode again. Double-click the Quick Mask icon at the bottom right of the toolbar and choose Selected Area from the Quick Mask options. Now paint over the white top that the girl is wearing, again keeping to the edges. Ensure you do not paint over the shoulder strap. Hit 'Q' to exit and generate the selection.



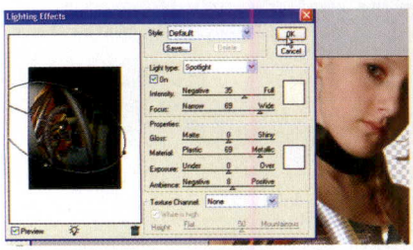
04 **SELECT AND FILL:** With the selection active, hit the backspace key to clear the area. Click the foreground colour swatch and choose a deep brown colour. Add a new layer ('Ctrl', 'Shift'& 'N') and go to Edit > Fill. Choose 'Foreground colour' for Contents and hit OK to fill the selection. Hit 'Ctrl'& 'D' to deselect. In the Layers palette, grab the figure layer and drag it above this filled area.



05 **FIT THE PARTS:** Open Machine1.jpg, or your own mechanic shot. Go to Select > All, followed by Edit > Copy. Now close this file and return to the main composition. Click on the filled section layer and go to Edit > Paste. This will paste the machine image below the figure layer. Go to Edit > Transform > Scale, and stretch the machine layer to fill the cavity in the chest using the handles around the Bounding box. Hit enter to commit the transformation. »»



06 TIDYING UP: Still working on the machine image layer, hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click the image thumbnail for the filled layer below it to generate a selection. Go to Select > Inverse and hit the backspace key on the keyboard to clear the unwanted areas of the layer. Hit 'Ctrl' & 'D' to deselect.

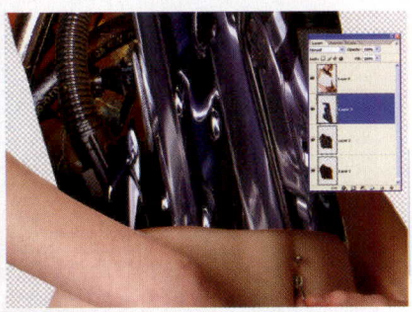


07 LIGHTING EFFECTS: Now we will turn our attention to lighting the inner workings of the android. Still on the machine layer, go to Filter > Render > Lighting Effects. Choose Spotlight for light type and drag the light pool in the Preview pane so that its centre sits roughly in the middle of the torso. Drag the direction handle on the pool around the image so that it throws the light from left to right. Adjust the sliders to match the screen shot and click OK. Refer to the 'See the light' box-out for more tips on using the Lighting Effects filter.

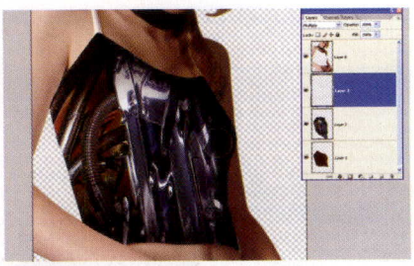
The lighting effects filter

The Lighting Effects filter is not only very powerful and effective, but remarkably easy to use. In the filter dialog itself, users are presented with a preview pane which shows the light pool as an elliptical outline superimposed on the actual image. You can rotate this light pool by dragging the small handle at the end of the axis line. The pool can be made bigger or small by dragging out the other handles placed around the pool. To move the light pool, grab the spot in the pool's centre and drag. The various sliders on the right of the dialog allow you control the intensity and focus of the light, changing the way the surface reacts to the light. You can also click on the light colour swatch to control the actual colour of the light.

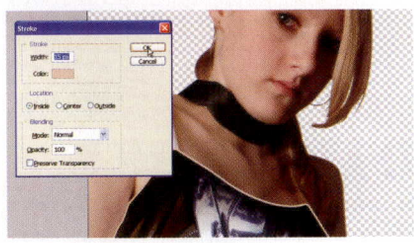
08 PASTE AND TRANSFORM: Open "Machine2.jpg", or your own secondary mechanic shot and go to Select > All, Edit > Copy. Now close this file. Go to Edit > Paste to paste the second layer of machine parts. Go to Edit > Transform > Distort and use the corner handles around the bounding box to stretch the machine parts down across the torso. Hit enter to commit the transformation



09 SELECTIVE ERASING: Choose the Eraser tool and use it to erase any unwanted areas of the Machine 2 layer around the main components. Now go to Layer > Merge Down to merge both machine layers. Add a new layer ('Ctrl,' 'Shift' & 'N'), and set its Blending mode to Multiply in the layers palette. Choose the Brush tool and select a soft brush from the Brush picker. Click the foreground colour swatch and select a very dark brown from the Colour picker.

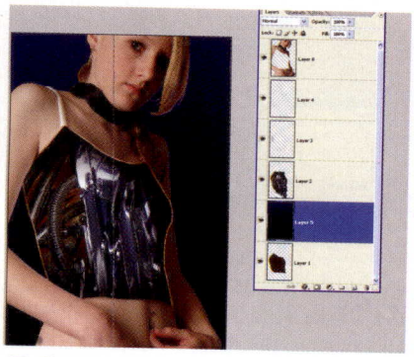


10 A LITTLE SHADING: Reduce the brush Opacity to 50% and click on the new multiplied layer. Now paint over the machine parts to create the effect of shadows within the cavity. Concentrate the shadows around the outer edges of the cavity, to create a convincing 3D feel to the area.

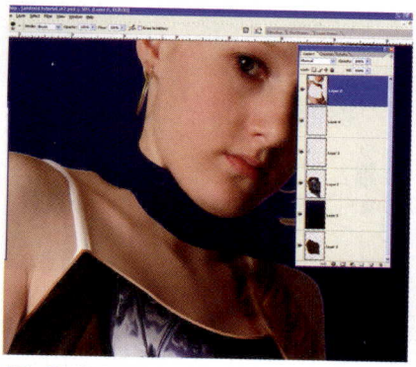


11 SKIN THICKNESS: Add another new layer. Working on this layer, hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click the image thumbnail for the filled torso layer to generate a selection. Choose the Eyedropper tool and sample a light area of skin. Now go to Edit > Stroke. Enter a stroke width of 15 pixels and select inside for location.

12 BURN TOOL SHADING: Choose the Eraser tool and erase the stroke running along the edges of the bottom of the cavity, forearm and the small section of stroke in the armpit. Now select the Burn tool. Set the Range to Midtones and the Exposure to 50%. Choose a soft brush and apply the tool over the corners of the skin thickness.



13 FILL IN THE BACKGROUND: Click on the bottom layer in the Layers palette. Now add a new layer ('Ctrl' 'Shift' & 'N'). Choose a mid blue for your foreground colour swatch, and a dark blue black for background. Select the Gradient tool and choose foreground to background from the Gradient picker. Click and drag the gradient from the top to the bottom of the image.



14 SEPARATE THE HEAD: Click on the main figure layer at the top of the stack. Choose the Eraser tool and erase away the black ribbon around the neck. Also erase the hair below the ear and finish the neck off neatly. What we're aiming for here is for the head to be completely detached from the torso, so the line you erase across the shoulders has to follow the contours of the body exactly.

15 REPOSITION THE HEAD: Choose the Polygon Lasso tool from the toolbar, and make a rough selection around the head. Now go to Edit > Cut to cut the head on the clipboard. Go to Edit > Paste to paste the head on to a new layer. Use the Move tool ('V') to position the new head a little further towards the right-hand side of the image.

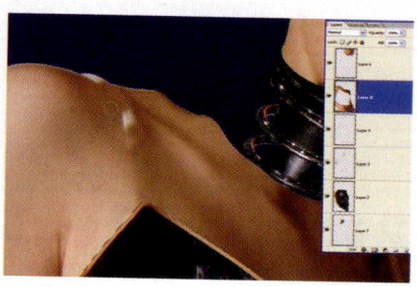
16 COPY AND PASTE: Open "spring.jpg", or your own shot for the neckpiece, and go to Select > All, Edit > Copy. Now close this image and return to the main composition. Go to Edit > Paste to paste the spring. In the Layers palette, drag the spring layer down the stack, dropping it between the Gradient fill and the machine parts layers. Go to Edit > Transform > Scale and drag the corner handles around the Bounding box to reduce the size of the spring. Hit enter to commit the transformation.

17 TRANSFORM AND DISTORT: Go to Edit > Transform > Distort. Use the handles around the box to position and distort the spring to fit the base of the neck. You can move the spring into the correct position by dragging inside the Bounding box. Choose the Eraser tool and carefully erase the unwanted areas from around the spring, leaving just the spring and central column visible.

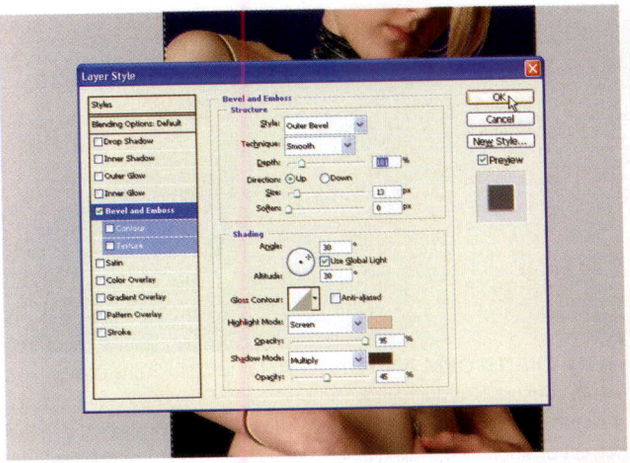
The clone stamp tool

The Clone Stamp tool is the perfect way to cover up skin blemishes and hide unwanted parts of clothing as we're doing here. Essentially, the tool itself copies one area of the image to another via a brush. To use the tool, you first need to set a cloning Source point. This source point tells Photoshop where to copy the image information from. To set the source point, hold down the 'Alt' key on the keyboard and click in an area of clear, unblemished skin. It's best to set this point as near as possible to the area you wish to clone over for continuity. Once the source point is set, you can simply begin to click over the offending area to clone it out. The tool is best used by clicking rather than dragging, and better results are obtained by choosing a soft brush from the picker.

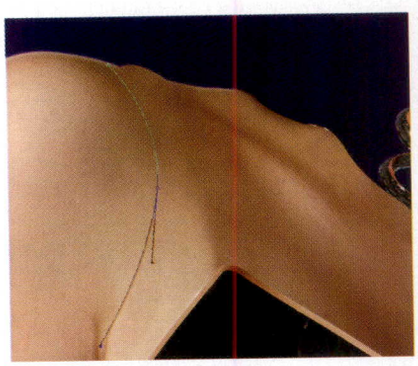
18 MORE SHADING: Return to the Multiply shading layer. Hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click the image thumbnail on the spring layer to generate a selection. Paint over the top of the spring with black using the Brush tool at a low opacity, to create a shadow on the spring beneath the chin.



19 A LITTLE CLONING: We need to clone out the strap and hair on the model's shoulders. Click on the main body layer and choose the Clone tool. Position the tool next to the shoulder strap on a clear section of skin and clone over the strap. Use the same technique to clone out the hair on the other shoulder. Refer to the 'Using the Clone tool' box-out for more cloning tips. »»



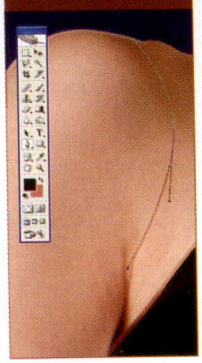
20 LAYER STYLE MAGIC: To add the joint lines, add a new layer ('Ctrl,' 'Shift' & 'N'). Go to Layer > Layer Style > Bevel and Emboss. In the 'Bevel and Emboss' dialog, use these values: Style: Outer Bevel, Technique: Smooth, Depth: 101, Direction: Up, Size: 13, Soften: 0. Click the Highlight mode Colour swatch and click on the lightest flesh colour in the image. Increase the highlight's Opacity to 95%. Now click OK to apply the chosen style.



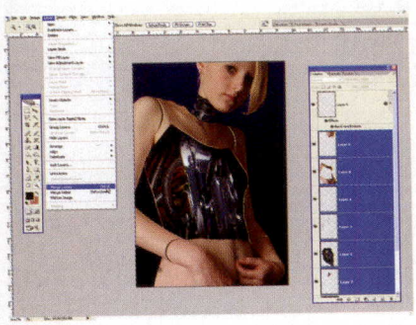
21 ADD THE JOINTS: Choose the Brush tool and select a hard, round 13 pixel brush. Click the foreground colour swatch and choose a deep brown colour. Now choose the Pen tool. Zoom in on the girl's wrist. Use the Pen tool to draw a joint curve around the wrist. To draw curves with the Pen tool, simply click and drag. Right-click the finished path with the Pen tool and choose Stroke path from the sub-menu. Check Simulate Pressure in the Stroke path dialog and click OK.

Paths and the pen tool

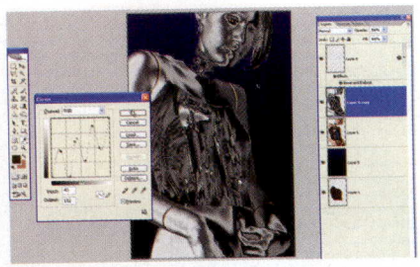
Paths are a very accurate and useful way to draw curves and straight lines. Once a path is drawn, it can be converted into a normal selection marquee. Paths are drawn with the Pen tool by plotting points. Although the Pen tool itself can seem intimidating, it's really quite easy to use after some practice. To begin drawing a path, simply click with the tool. To draw curves, click and drag the tool, and to draw straight line sections, simply click. As you pull a curve from the Pen tool you can adjust the height and rake of the curve simply by moving the tool around the screen. If you need a sudden change of direction in your path, hold down the 'Alt' key and click the previously plotted point. Before beginning a path, make sure that the Paths button is activated in the Options bar.



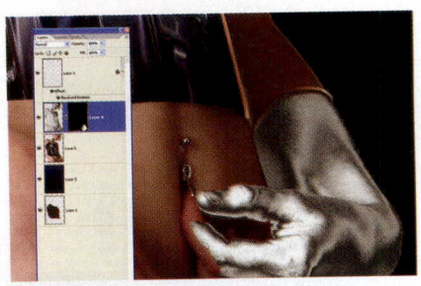
22 MORE JOINTS: Click the tab for the Paths palette and, in the palette itself, click just below the work path to deselect. Now repeat the above for another joint line on the body. Remember to deselect the previous path after stroking before drawing the next joint. Finally, return to the Layers palette before continuing.



23 MERGE THE LAYERS: Click on the head layer. Now hold down the 'Ctrl' key and click on the main body layer, and every other layer down to, but not including, the gradient filled layer, so that they are all highlighted in the Layers palette. Merge these layers to together via Layer > Merge Layers. You should have the entire figure on one layer now. Duplicate this layer via Layer > Duplicate Layer.

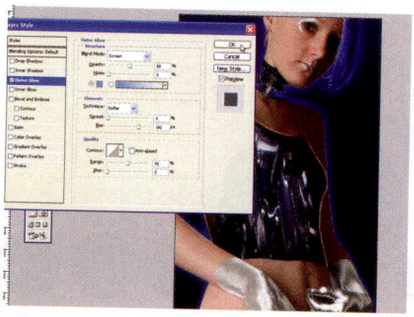


24 SILVER SKIN: Working on the duplicate figure layer, go to Image > Adjustments > Desaturate. Boost the contrast via Image > Adjustments > Contrast using these values: Brightness +23, Contrast +10. Now go to Image > Adjustments > Curves. Click 6 points equally spaced along the curve. Now drag each point to create a curve the same shape as in the screenshot and hit OK. You can then adjust the tones in the silver finish via Image > Adjustments > Brightness and Contrast.



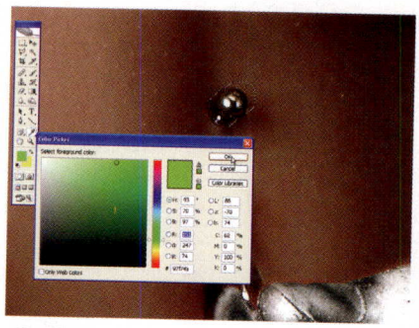
25 SELECTIVE MASKING: Add a layer mask via Layer > Layer Mask > Hide all. Now choose the Brush tool with a hard round tip and ensure that your foreground colour is white. Paint over the hands on to the mask to reveal the silver, taking care to keep to the exact outline. Also cover the lips and around the eye to reveal some silver. Use single clicks of the brush at various sizes to add the small spots.

26 CHANGE THE HAIR COLOUR: Return to the main figure layer and use the Polygon lasso tool to make a rough selection around the head. Right click inside the selection and choose Layer via copy from the menu. Go to Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation. Check the Colourize box and drag the sliders to these values: hue 227, saturation 69. Add a layer mask via Layer > Layer Mask > Hide All. Paint white over the hair using the Brush tool in order to reveal the blue.

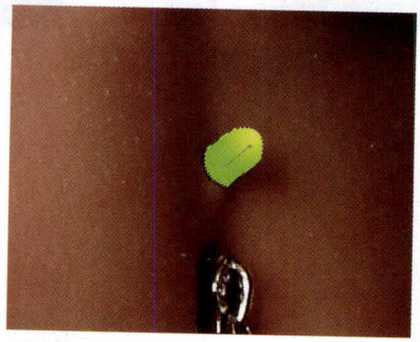


27 ADD A LAYER STYLE: Return to the main figure layer and go to Layer > Layer Style > Outer Glow. In the Layer Style dialog, click the Glow colour swatch and choose a vivid blue from the Colour picker. Set the Opacity slider to 50%, Spread 0, and Size 182. Click OK to apply the style.

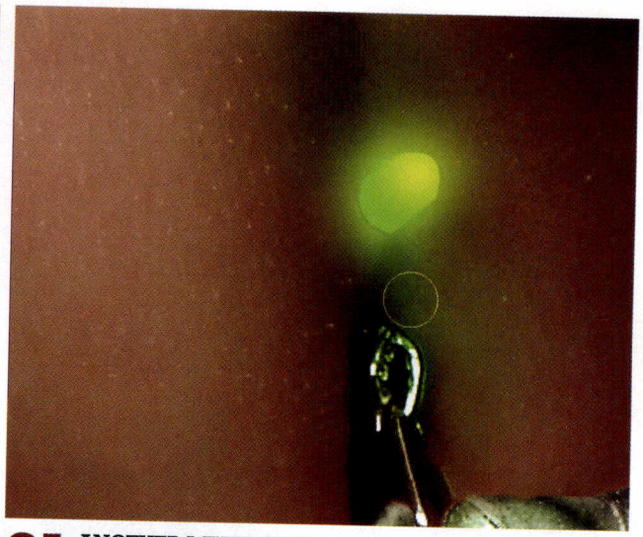
28 BACKGROUND INTEREST: Click on the gradient filled layer. Open "wave.jpg", and go to Select > All, Edit > Copy. Now close the file and return to the main composition. Go to Edit > Paste to paste the wave on a layer. Stretch the wave to fit the image via Edit > Transform > Scale. Drag the handles around the Bounding box and hit Return. Rotate the layer via Edit > Transform > Rotate so the wave runs diagonally across. Set the layer Blending mode to Screen.



29 DRAW A PATH: Select the main figure layer from the Layers palette. Add a new layer ('Ctrl,' 'Shift & 'N') and zoom in on the navel piercing. Choose the Pen tool and draw a shape for the LED (refer to the 'Pen tool' box-out for hints). Right-click within the completed path and choose Make Selection. Click the foreground colour swatch and choose a bright green. Choose a bright yellow for the background swatch.



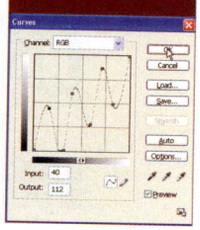
30 FILL WITH GRADIENT: Choose the Gradient tool. Click in the Gradient picker and select the foreground to background gradient. Select the Radial Gradient option in the Options bar and check reverse. Starting at the top of the LED shape, click and drag the gradient down over the length of the shape. Hit 'Ctrl'&'D' to deselect.

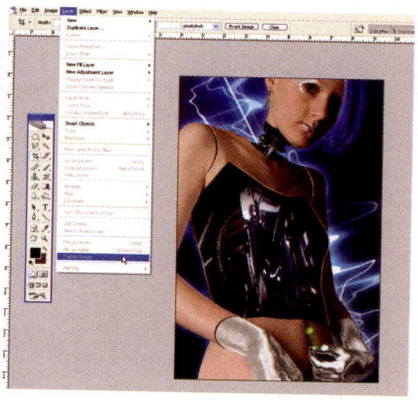


31 ANOTHER LAYER STYLE: Go to Layer > Layer Style > Outer Glow. As described in step 27, adjust the Style properties and choose a bright green for the glow colour. Click OK to apply the style. Add another new layer and set the Blending mode to Colour. Now use the Brush tool with a soft brush to paint a little reflected green on the nearby areas of skin with the brush opacity set to a low value in the Options bar.

The curves dialog

In this tutorial we have used the Curves command to create the silver effect on the skin. The dialog looks a little complicated, but it's really quite easy to use. Here we're adding 6 points to the curve to result in the curve shape shown here. Begin by clicking the point along the curve while it's still diagonal. Now replicate the curve shape by dragging each handle in the appropriate direction. Start from the first point on the left hand side. Make sure you have the Preview box checked so that you can judge the result on the image itself.





32 FINISHING TOUCHES: It's always a good idea to save a version of the file with the layers intact as a .PSD file (via File > Save As), just in case you need to return to the image and make alterations to a particular layer at some point in the future. Now flatten all of the layers in the image via Layer > Flatten Image. Save the flattened image as a TIFF file.

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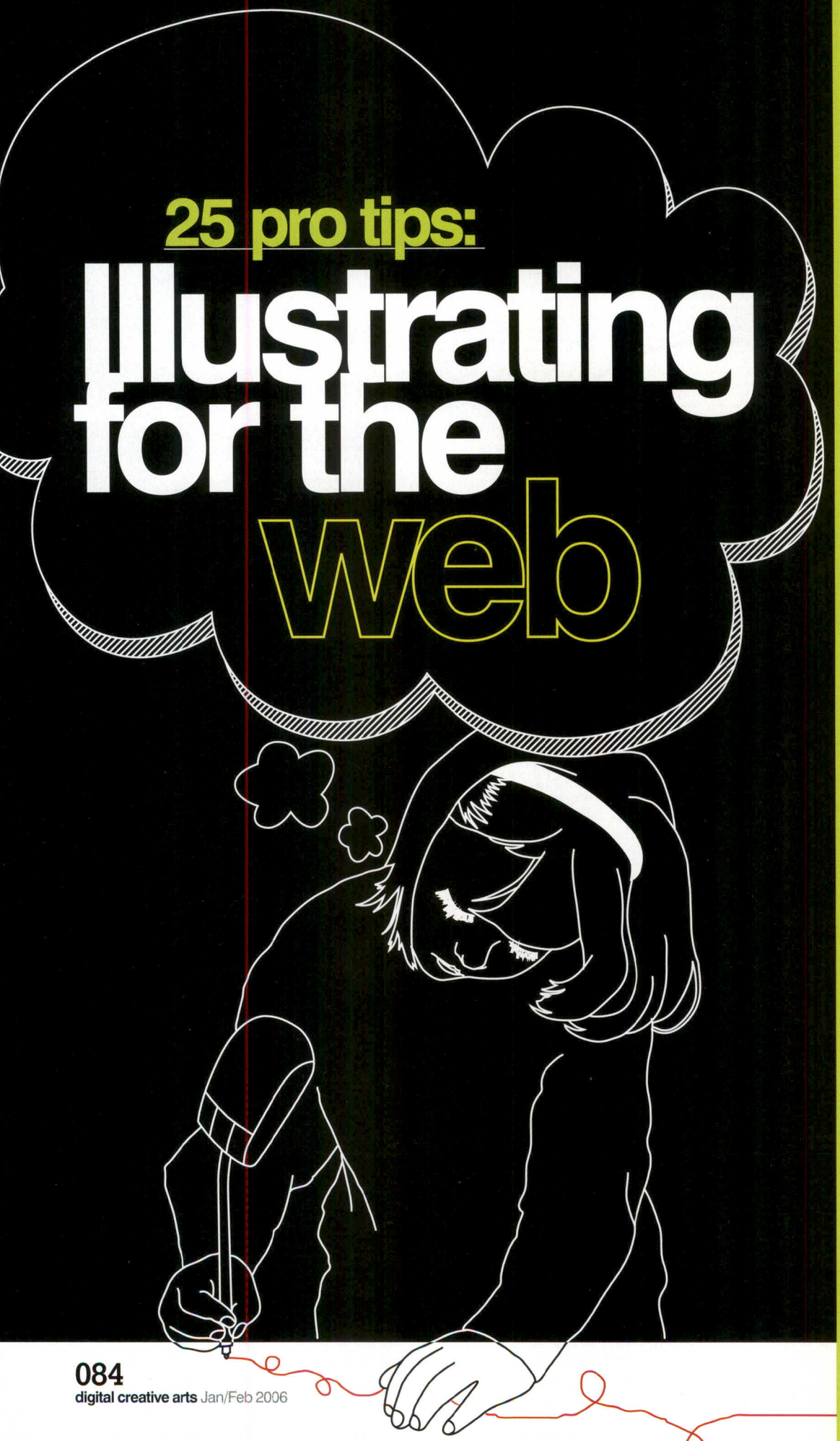
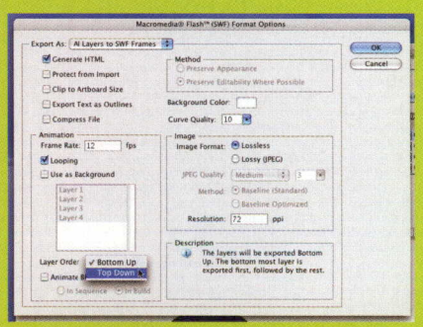


We've brought together twenty five essential hints and tips for the more advanced aspects of web illustration. Whether you're a dab hand at web design, or are just looking for some tips to help you master your illustration workspace, read on to find out more.

Take the shortcut

The quickest way to navigate your way around any design application is to lose the dependence on the mouse for certain actions. Okay, it's difficult to not make use of the mouse (or a graphics tablet) when illustrating, but for selecting the most common menu options there are usually some keyboard shortcuts available.

One of the most useful is the Save shortcut. Tapping 'Ctrl'& 'S' (or 'Command' & 'S' on a Mac) periodically will ensure that even if your system crashes the amount of work you lose is minimal. The majority of illustration programs have other shortcuts that are not described within the documentation fully. Within Illustrator and Photoshop, for instance, you can nudge the cursor using the arrow keys on the keyboard. This allows you to reposition selected artwork in super quick time.



Animate from illustrator

While Flash is superb for producing interactive websites, it's terrible when it comes to creating graphic components. Using Illustrator to create the animations as well as the graphics will simplify your

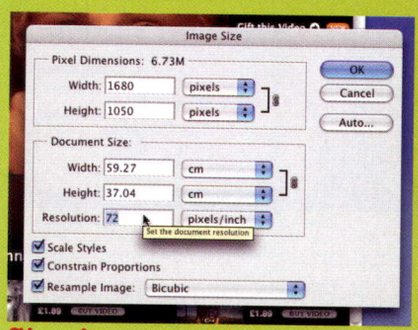
Equip yourself

When it comes to illustration, the best results will come as a result of using equipment you feel at home with. Whether it's a graphics tablet, mouse or even a touch-screen monitor, don't follow the trends of others, follow what you feel most comfortable in using.

Apple's Mighty Mouse is a new offering for Mac users; the Microsoft mouse range offers a very good range of choices for PC users and WACOM should be your first point of call for graphics tablets.

workflow. Animation works best with simple graphics, although you can animate virtually anything within an Illustrator document. Select the graphic you wish to animate. Within the Layer palette, click the New Layer button and place onto each layer a copy of your graphic. Make subtle adjustments to the graphic on each layer, reflecting each frame of your animation. Then, just rearrange each layer so that they follow in the order you'd like the frames to appear.

Click File, Export and from Export As select Macromedia Flash. From the Flash options select All Layers to SWF Frames. Experiment with the options underneath Animation to set the order and speed of your Flash file.



Size is everything

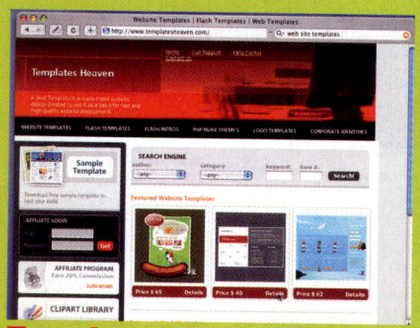
When you're dealing with a printed page, it makes little difference how big the file is on your hard disk as the reader never sees it. With a web site, the reader knows how big the file is because they have to download it to their computer. This in itself can be a limitation on the web graphic artist.

ImageReady (supplied with Photoshop) enables you to cut an image into slices. As each slice can then load independently of the other the load time of your page is significantly reduced; and the user gets to see the page building up.

If you're producing backdrop graphics for a site, remember that there are still users working to an 800 x 600 desktop; so keeping underneath these dimensions will make sure that your audience is as wide as possible.

Using graphical pop ups

It's fair to assume that most Digital Creative Arts readers regularly frequent the internet and will therefore be aware that pop up advertising, graphics or whatever is the bane of many a web surfer. If you'd like people to appreciate your artwork rather than curse the appearance of it, just remember not to use pop up windows.



Templates

If you need to produce a website on a budget, a ready made template is the most cost effective option. Available for Flash or Photoshop customisation, there's potential for a great deal of interactivity; or a simple static online shop.

Prices vary from around £20 to £50 for non-exclusive use of a site design; and upwards of £1000 for the exclusive use, if you can get in quick enough.

Make sure in either case that you are supplied with all the necessary source elements for the site, as the only way a template can effectively be used is with customisation. With the source available you can make your site unique, which is what web users will be looking for.

Layout mode

Entering the layout mode within Dreamweaver allows you to draw cells and tables directly onto the page. Focusing on design rather than the technology behind it, theoretically this method offers more control over the elements, in turn allowing you the designer to spend more time producing your artwork-perfect!

Kill the toolbars

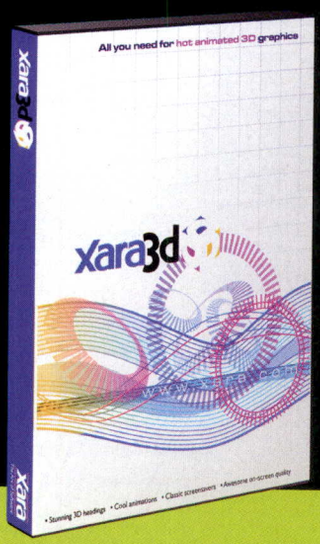
If you're producing large-scale graphics in Photoshop the presence of toolbars can get in the way. Photoshop allows you to make the toolbars disappear – simply tap the tab key and they'll disappear into the darkness. Tap the tab key again and they reappear. Perfect if you're using a desktop graphics tablet.

Layers are your friends

If you are producing an online banner advertisement, Layers enable you to lock in place certain corporate elements, such as the logo for your company or a piece of artwork. To do this for yourself, open the Layers palette in Photoshop or Illustrator and make sure that a padlock is placed in the field next to the name for each layer containing items you wish to keep within the same place. Select an alternative layer to work on, and you'll never run into the problem of an accidental delete corrupting part of your document. If you are using Illustrator, this action will offer you the added option of producing a Flash animation from your design project. >>>

Produce professional headings

The majority of us have a combination of professional packages to meet our print and web needs. However if you're producing illustrations for a living, try getting help from a specialist tool. Xara 3D is a slim line application with a focus on producing professional headings. The full version is on this issue's free CD-ROM, and here's how you get started



Step one. Install Xara3D from the cover disc, and launch it in the usual fashion. Click on the 'I Bar' button to add a cursor into the display, and type the heading for your site

Step two. Using the Extrude button you can set the colour of your created heading and whether or not the text should have a front or back face

Step three. Select the style of animation. With three styles available – rotate, swing and pulsate – there's something here. When finished click File, then Export bitmap or Export animation

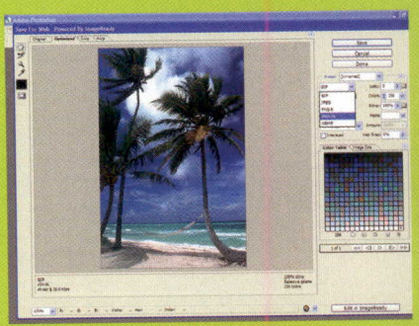
illustrating for the web

GoLive or go dream?

Which should you, as a designer, choose? If you've already invested in Photoshop and Illustrator, it's worth considering an upgrade to GoLive CS2 if only for the integration offered with other programs in the Creative Suite. On the otherhand, Dreamweaver and Flash are very tightly connected; and while it's no longer a part of Macromedia Studio Freehand MX still integrates very well. The choice is yours – for the moment, at least. When the takeover of Macromedia by Adobe is complete you may lose the choice as the companies perform some form of product rationalisation. Digital Creative Arts' bet is that Freehand will disappear entirely, joined by GoLive.

Drawing with Dreamweaver

Whereas Photoshop and GoLive are tightly integrated, Dreamweaver and Fireworks follow to certain degree. Fireworks is Macromedia's answer to Photoshop with a little more focus towards web design. It's a component of Macromedia Studio, and using it you can perform simple edits to both vector and bitmap graphics. Details are at www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks. Within Dreamweaver click the 'Quick Launch' button for speedy and dynamic access.



Find the right format

There are literally hundreds of different file formats out there, but only a handful are suitable for the internet. Not all apps will export each format – it wouldn't make sense for Photoshop, a bitmap-editing package, to export in vector format. However where appropriate most applications support more than one of these formats.

The formats most widely used on the internet are:

GIF. Graphics Interchange Format. Limited to 256 colours, but one of the fastest file formats available out there.

JPEG. Joint Photographic Experts Group. The standard for photographic-quality images, and designed for that purpose from the word go.

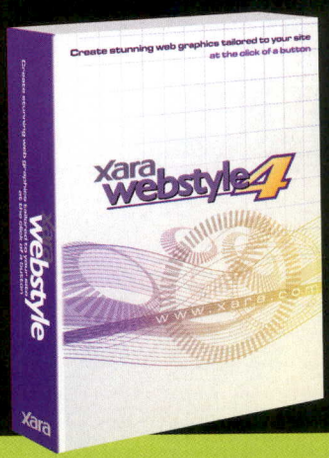
PNG. Portable Network Graphic. Designed to replace GIF as a result of legal issues, PNG offers higher resolution images but most users find it somewhat restrictive.

SVG. Scalable Vector Graphic. A lossless graphics file format for vector-quality images, the uptake has been slow but it's one of a number of standards suitable for use on the mobile internet.

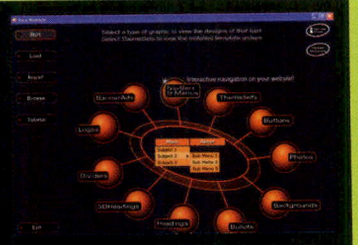
SWF. Shockwave Flash. Macromedia's means of providing interactive media across the internet can also be used for static graphic files.

Set up a site in style

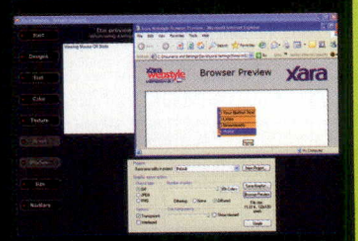
When putting together a website, one very important consideration is setting a consistent style for each section. There are two ways to do this. The first is to make use of a tool designed to offer the starting points of a site; but in an environment where you can customise it without fuss. One such tool is Xara Webstyle, and it's featured on the *DCA* cover disc.



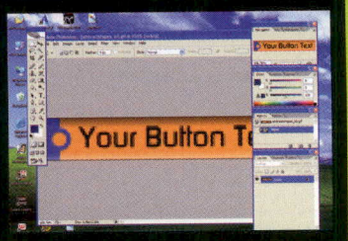
Step one. Install Xara Webstyle from the disc in the usual fashion then launch it. The Xara interface is very much a no frills affair to access a section just click an icon. Click NavBars & Menus



Step two. Select a style that appeals in terms of structure. To test how it works within a web browser, click Save then Browser Preview, click Advanced and increase the number of colours

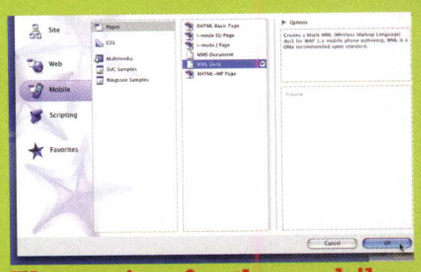


Step three. Click Save Graphic to save the graphic and its components onto your hard disk. To customise them beyond the capabilities of Webstyle, open Photoshop and load each component into it



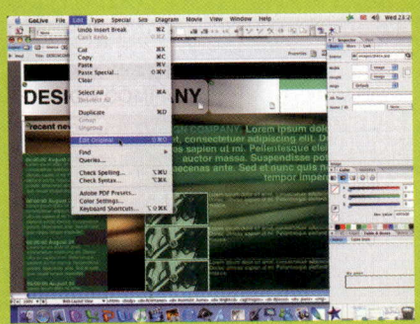
Iconic address bars

If you'd like to add a corporate identity to your address bar, why not produce a miniature version of your logo or a key graphic? To produce the icon in Photoshop all you'll need a plug-in from **www.telegraphics.com.au/sw/.** The end result will be 16 x 16, so the graphic you choose needs to be something very simple. To create a new image in Photoshop click 'File' then 'New' and enter a multiple of 16 – e.g. 32, 48, 64 – in both the X and Y values. Design your logo as appropriate. When ready to save click 'Image', 'Image Size' and resize the image to 16 x 16.



Illustrating for the mobile internet

If you're producing illustrations for use on mobile phones, it's worth remembering one thing. The screen resolution available through WAP services is pretty low, so while most camera phones have a VGA resolution display their internet browser is unable to reflect this. GoLive CS2 is extremely adept at the creation of both XML and WML format sites offering relative ease in the construction of web sites. An increasing number of mobile manufacturers are supporting the SVG format in their browsers; and these bring convenience of a vector file format to the mobile web.



Object linking and embedding

If you discover there's something wrong with a graphical element it can be difficult to correct the fault. If your web design package of choice is, however, GoLive CS 2, you'll find it is very tightly integrated with the other components of Creative Suite.

Therefore if you wish to edit a graphic element created in either Photoshop or Illustrator the program can load and insert them, allowing you to edit the file. To do this, select the graphic element, then Edit and Edit Original. When you return to GoLive CS 2 the program will update the display to reflect your most recent edits.

Web design without the code

If you are creatively minded but not technically adept, try using a web design package that offers powerful features that do not require knowledge of HTML or XML. Freeway is published by Softpress and offers exactly that a design based environment allowing professional web designs to be produced without having to worry about the technical side of things.

Flash in the pan

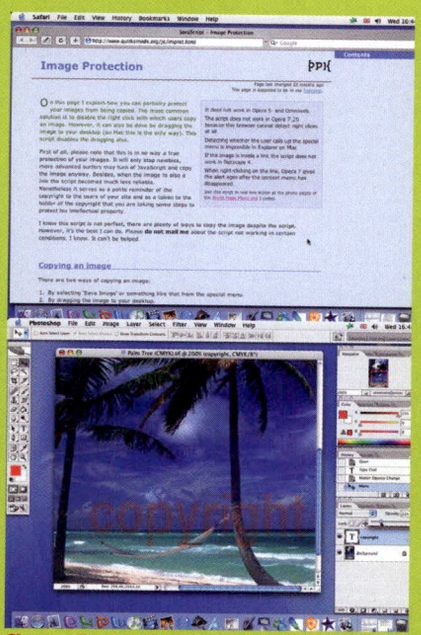
To be certain that visitors to your site get the experience you're hoping for; make a point of previewing it within your favourite web browser. Remember that everybody uses a

Motion Tweens in Flash

Animation in Flash works very well. Usually. But try to do too many things at once and you'll run into complications. Where possible create effects with motion tweens following on from each other. This will reduce the likelihood of such complications.

different web browser. While it's okay to assume that the majority of PC users will use Internet Explorer and Mac users Safari; there's no guarantee either way. If you're designing for a commercial site, test on as many web browsers as possible.

To create a preview in Flash click File, Publish Preview and HTML.

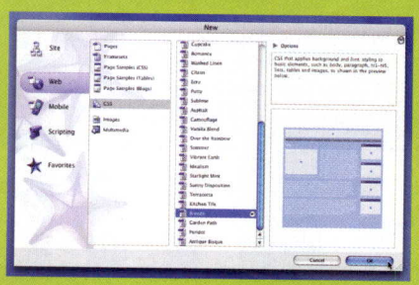


Stand up for your rights

If your image appears as a fair size on the site, embed a watermark using Photoshop perhaps a credit or copyright message leaving no doubt about the usage allowance. In Photoshop, an easy way to do this is to enter the text as usual; then reduce the opacity of the layer so barely see the text on top of the image.

At the top of your home page, add a comment. You can state here what you'll allow people to do with the site and artwork, or request that they email. In this respect you can decide whether or not to grant permission. As a further deterrent, add some Javascript to the page to disable access to the copy functions.

There's a very elegant option available at www.quirksmode.org/js/improt.html. Simply work your way down to the code then copy and paste it into a JavaScript header on each page you wish to protect. This should stop any users stealing your work.



Cascading style sheets

Cascading Style Sheets can be used to ensure consistent style and presentation for your web pages regardless of the presentation medium used. Whether onscreen, in print, by voice or on a Braille based device you can use Cascading Style Sheets to ensure that a consistent style for your documents is maintained.

To define a CSS in GoLive CS2, create a new document. Select CSS for document type then select the style of document to create. Each has a number of pre-defined styles. Click OK to open the style; then click each in turn to alter the styles to suit your own needs.

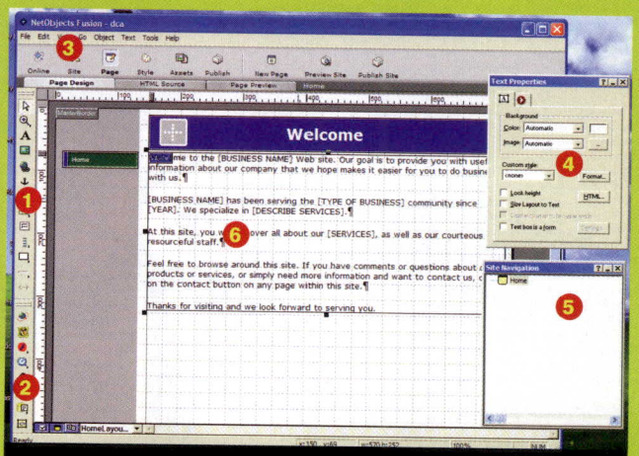
When you're finished click File then Save As and enter a name for the style file. You can then easily refer to this while creating your web page.

Extension manager

Just as Photoshop and Illustrator have filters, Flash and Dreamweaver have extensions. Whichever way you look at it, there are plug-ins allowing you to get more out of the program in question with the minimum of effort. A visit to **www.macromedia.com/cfusion/exchange/index.cfm** will provide a number of 'official' extensions; while **www.webassist.com** has a huge number of professionally designed commercial alternatives.

Properties inspector

As one of Dreamweaver's key components, the Properties Inspector gives you details of the properties you can alter within a selected item. If text is selected, controls are given for editing text; with graphics controls for manipulating graphics and so on. You can make this appear or disappear by pressing Command and F3 ('Ctrl'& 'F3' on a PC). ■



Take time to find your way around

The first time you migrate to a new design tool, take a few days to work your way around it before using it as part of your workflow. Being able to find your way around a program quickly, working out the keyboard shortcuts and learning tricks on ways to achieve the most professional result is essential in a commercial environment

1 Toolbar. Look towards the toolbar for a quick way to create tables, links, navigation bars and other components of a website

2 Content. Need to place a graphic, text frame or Flash element into a Fusion document? Drag the element graphic into the document, import the element then click and drag to resize and reposition

3 Views. Fusion allows you to view the whole site, a single page or different areas of the site structure such as the styles used

4 Properties box. This changes depending upon the tool that you currently have selected

5 Site navigation. Find your way around the different pages in your site quickly and easily. Double-click on a page to open it

"Whichever way you look at it, there are plug-ins allowing you to get more out of the program with the minimum of effort"

Evolve >

Your work. Your way. Introducing **3ds max 6.**

"Crazy and challenging—that's what the visual effects business is. As a visual effects supervisor, I find **3ds max**® irreplaceable in our pipeline. It provides a multitude of approaches to our complex challenges, the flexibility to support our own scripts and pipeline tools, and customization capabilities to shape it into whatever we need. **3ds max** allows our artist's to personalize the way they work, yet maintain studio-wide standardization. With **3ds max**, we're able to stay sane and deliver on-time against the high-paced insanity."

Check out Ben's **3ds max** work and sign up to get a free 30-day trial of **3ds max** at **www.discreet.com/evolve**.

3ds max /ben

Visual Effects Supervisor, Founder
Ben Girard

Studio
Digital Dimension

Awards
Four time Emmy Award winner

Focus
Motion Pictures Visual Effects
Elf, November '03
The Last Samurai, December '03
Freddy vs. Jason
Duplex
Final Destination II
Reign of Fire
Mr. Deeds

Broadcast Effects and Design
Alias, ABC
TBS SuperStation
Pepsi World Cup Ad
Nascar, FOX
NFL, FOX
Super Bowl XXXVI
Super Bowl XXXIII

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dca labs

Every issue
The latest creative kit reviewed by the DCA experts

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Graphics Tablet: In the digital studio, the graphics tablet has become more indispensible than the common mouse, but will Wacom's brand new Graphire4 model prove a must-have buy?

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Software: We've gone through Eovia's latest 3D software offering with a fine tooth comb to discover whether it lives up to all the recent hype. Will it be a case of 'wow' or 'what were they thinking'? Find out on page 92.

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Software: Nero 7 Premium is finally here and is being billed as THE "home Hollywood movie studio." All those budding Speilbergs among you can take a look at our in depth review of this complete suite on page 94.

96 Kodak EasyShare P880
Digital camera: This high-quality Kodak camera brings keen photographers a user friendly alternative to DSLRs. On page 97 we expose whether it really is value for money.

97 3D Buzz Mastering Maya
Software: Following a tutorial is a great way of learning new skills, but sometimes there's no substitute for watching the masters in action. 3D Buzz's latest aims to take you from beginner to Maya master in 72 hours.

99 DCA labs group test
Scanners: In this issue's mega test we put four market leading photo scanners from the competitive under £200 price bracket through their paces.

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Graphics tablet

Wacom Graphire4 Studio XL

SPECIFICATIONS
Wacom Graphire4 Studio XL

CONTACT: (Computers Unlimited) 0208 358 9548

PRICE: £179.99

URL: www.wacom.com

OPERATING SYSTEMS: Windows 98SE, ME, 2000, XP / Mac OSX 10.2.8 or higher

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS PC: IBM compatible PC (800MHz or higher), 256MB RAM, 24-bit colour

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS MAC: PowerPC G3, 256MB RAM, 24-bit colour

CONNECTIVITY: USB

DIMENSIONS: 278 x 263.8 x 18mm

WEIGHT: 860g

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Wacom Graphire4 Studio XL tablet

Pen

Quick start guide

Tablet driver software and user manual CD-ROM

Color Efex Pro 2.0 Standard CD-ROM

Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0 CD-ROM

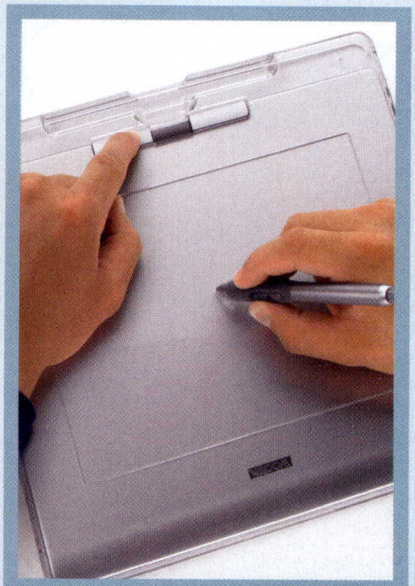
Finally, a range of graphics tablets with an affordable price tag, **CHRIS LEAN** discovers whether Wacom's latest consumer tablets can make the grade.

Graphics tablets have been the preserve of professional designers and image-makers for some time now, but their high price has made them a prohibitive purchase for most other consumers.

Now, thanks to leading manufacturers like Wacom, the price of this technology is tumbling and a quality tablet is rapidly becoming the next must-have tool for all designers, digital artists and photographers - whatever their budget. The new Graphire4 range is designed specifically for the consumer market. It consists of four different models, all offering different sizes and features. The Graphire Classic and Classic XL are sized at A6 and A5 respectively, while the Graphire Studio and Studio XL offer essentially the same specs and sizes, but with a copy of Photoshop Elements 3 bundled in for a combined hardware and software solution. The prices range between £75 for the ultra-affordable Classic model and £180 for the Studio XL reviewed here.

But what exactly does this tablet do, and why is it a worthwhile investment for digital artists? In essence, the Studio XL is a replacement for your mouse, giving you the ability to control your cursor with greater dexterity and precision than you can ever achieve using a traditional device. The surface of the tablet is approximately the same shape as your monitor screen so, by using the electronic pen provided, you can locate your cursor to a specific point on screen by touching the corresponding point on the tablet.

As a tool for designers, there are obvious and immediate benefits. By using an electronic pen that can be handled and moved just as you would an ordinary pen or pencil, it is possible to manipulate your images with complete precision. You can draw onto the tablet just as you would onto a sheet of paper using pen and ink or a paintbrush, and the strokes you make will be replicated exactly on screen. Not only can you try out your creative ideas more quickly, but you can realize them with more accuracy too. The pen has 512 levels of pressure sensitivity so that your hand movements can be interpreted with an extremely high degree of precision. The freedom of movement and sensitivity of the pen means that your digital projects are injected with a direct human touch that might



Interacting with WACOM's Graphire4 Studio XL
The Graphire4 Studio XL is designed to make image editing and design work easier. Let's take a look at it in action...

Programmable keys By configuring the two Express Keys to your most commonly used keyboard buttons, you can cut out the keyboard entirely when doing imaging work.

The tablet Each point on the touch-sensitive tablet corresponds to the equivalent point on your monitor screen, therefore all you need to do is position your pen precisely to locate the area you're working on.

The pen It's easier to keep control of your cursor using a pen rather than a mouse, especially when you're working on fine details. The pen features two buttons that correspond to the left and right-click buttons on your mouse.

The scroll wheel incorporated into a pen tablet for the first time, the scroll wheel allows you to zoom in and out of photos and browse them quickly and easily, without having to access on-screen controls.

"this handful of buttons makes it possible to ignore your keyboard"

otherwise be lost via a clumsy and imprecise computer mouse.

The Studio XL tablet itself keeps other controls to a minimum, but two buttons called 'Express Keys' are positioned along the top of the tablet and can be customised to represent a wide range of functions, from an automatic 'double-click' to a modifier key such as 'Ctrl' or 'Alt'. Alternatively, you can program an Express Key to open a pop-up menu, onto which you can then add a further range of keystroke and file opening options. In between the two Express Keys we find a scroll key – something like the scroll wheel found between the left and right buttons of most mice – which acts as a zoom control and browsing tool when images are open on your screen.

On the electronic pen there are two further buttons, plus a pressure-sensitive eraser on the opposite end from the nib. The two controls on the side of the pen are set by default to be the equivalent of a right-click and double-click on a mouse but, like the Express Keys, they can be customised to perform pretty much any task you want. In use, we found that the pen buttons were located a little too high up the body of the pen to be comfortably accessible. This proved a problem when trying to double-click a selected item, as the inevitable nudge required to press the side of the pen makes the cursor wobble away from the point being selected. Users may prefer to change the default settings so that double-click is accessed via an Express Key instead. Alternatively, you can always tap the pen twice against the tablet for the same effect.

Quibbles aside, this small handful of customisable buttons makes it just about possible to ignore your keyboard completely when doing imaging work. This is vital, because an A5-sized graphics tablet takes up a significant amount of desktop space – certainly a lot more than a mouse pad – so it's convenient to be able to move your keyboard aside for the duration of your design session and not have to jump between the two.

The issue of size also highlights a more general drawback for users of the Studio XL. As a design tool it is extremely valuable, but as a permanent alternative to a mouse it can be a cumbersome device. Many people may find that their desk doesn't allow the space to keep it set up all the time, and for general PC-usage, such as opening and closing programs, moving folders, surfing the net and word processing, a mouse is just as easy and possibly more efficient.

There's also a physical difference to the process of using a tablet compared to using a mouse. Whereas a mouse can be positioned anywhere on your desk without affecting the position of your cursor on screen, the electronic pen must be positioned at a specific point on the tablet to perform a task on-screen. It's a system that takes some getting used to.

All in all, this is a superb tool for creating digital art, especially as it incorporates a full version of Adobe Photoshop Elements 3, one of the best image editing packages around for those without a budget that can stretch to Photoshop. It's not the most recent version of the software, but it will still provide ample opportunity for the tablet to stretch its legs. ■

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: The Studio XL delivers natural flexibility and precision to your digital imaging and carries a useful set of customisable controls for hours of fun.

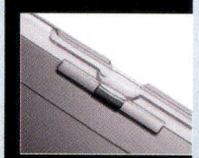
BAD: First time users will find it hard to get used to handling a pen rather than a mouse, and the tablet takes up a lot of desk space.

★★★★

In depth

A closer look at the key features of Wacom's Graphire4 tablet

Using the pen
The newly designed pen is light in weight and has a rubberised grip, making it comfortable to hold and easy to control. Flip it round in your hand and the rear end can be used as an electronic eraser.



The express keys
The two large buttons at the top of the tablet are known as the 'Express Keys'. They are freely programmable and can be configured to any frequently used keyboard functions, such as the 'Ctrl' & 'Alt' buttons for accessing shortcuts.

Adobe Photoshop Elements
The Graphire4 Studio XL comes bundled with a copy of Adobe Photoshop Elements 3. This is the perfect software for showcasing the tablet's best qualities, as it features a wide range of powerful photo editing tools. A photo filters plug-in is also bundled on a separate disc.

Software

Carrara 3D Basics 2

This simplified yet refined modeling suite aims to offer a solid introduction to the world of 3D creativity, but does it succeed? We take a closer look…

SPECIFICATIONS
Carrara 3D Basics 2
CONTACT: Eovia
PRICE: £82.52
URL: www.eovia.com
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS PC:
Windows 98 or higher
PII processor or higher
128Mb RAM
300Mb hard drive space
Compatible DX9 graphics card
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS MAC: Mac OS X 10.1 or higher
G3 processor or higher
128 Mb RAM
300MB Hard drive space
OpenGL graphic processor

In the world of 3D modeling and rendering (as in pretty much any other creative genre), there's little point in trying to run before you can walk. When watching a movie like *Shrek* or *Madagascar*, it's all too common to begin fantasizing about building a 3D character or scene on your computer then bringing it to life with animation. After all, how hard can it be? Well, the only way to scratch such a creative itch is to invest in (or, perhaps more cheaply, download the demo of) some modeling software and have a go yourself. However, it's no overstatement to say that 3D software is particularly tricky to get to grips with, and many would-be modelers are put off by the almost-vertical learning curves that exist in the most powerful and effective rendering tools on the market. So, what to do?

In reality, the best way to introduce yourself to the joys of digital 3D design is to initially set your sights a little lower. Instead of diving straight into the big-hitters like Maya, Lightwave or Cinema4D and hitting that inevitable brick wall of confusing tools and awkward interfaces, it pays to ease yourself in more slowly. Which is, rather handily, where Eovia's Carrara 3D Basics 2 comes in.

Those who are already acquainted with the 3D modeling market will have undoubtedly already come across Eovia's more professional rendering tool, Carrara Pro. Although this suite isn't as high-end as the likes of Maya, it aims to occupy that middle ground between advanced intricacy and entry-level approachability. But with a price tag ascending to a few hundred pounds, its cost is still very much prohibitive to those who wish to break their way into rendering without having to re-mortgage their house.

So, in order to bridge the gap, Eovia has produced this slimmed-down version of the tool that it's marketing squarely at the 3D beginner. Now in it's second version, Carrara 3D Basics has been boosted by a few welcome additions that were primarily developed for the professional Carrara releases, meaning that users will be able to get their hands on some meaty and malleable new creation tools to further expand their creative horizons.

So, what's new in this release? Well, first up is the heavily improved terrain modeler. Although it was possible to create lifelike landscapes and seascapes in the previous version of 3D Basics, the process has become much more organic this time around thanks to the reworked dialog. Now, it's much easier and quicker to specify attributes and then sit back and watch as the software generates a well balanced, natural-looking scene complete with smooth undulations, complex mountain formations and soothing lakes and oceans.

To further enhance the effect, 3D Basis 2 also sports a brand new sky simulator. This nifty tool enables you to design a range of skies to suite pretty much any mood that your scene demands, including everything from warm sunsets through overcast days to stormy nights. Each condition is controlled

Finding your way around

A quick guide to the tools and features of Carrara 3D Basics 2

1 Navigation controls
Clicking on these tools enables you to use the mouse to move the camera around the 3D world. This is crucial for judging correct object alignment, plus it also helps you to move in close for a spot of precision modeling

2 3D camera
You can use this view to frame scenes for rendering, or alternatively set up camera shots for recording during animations

3 Animation toolbar
At the bottom of the screen is a set of controls that can be used to construct 3D animations. Playback controls can be found along the top

4 Object list
The Instances palette gives a list of each object, including light sources, that is present in a scene. Click on an item in the list to select the chosen object, without having to first find it in the 3D view

"This is a beginner-friendly suite with a host of prebuilt scenes"

via sliders that provide a fine level of manipulation so that you can get exactly the results you are after. A preview window is also provided so that you can see how your tweaking is affecting the final outcome. And when you're done, just hit a button and the sky will be rendered in all its full-screen glory.

But of course, this being a beginner-friendly 3D suite, there's plenty of provision for those who prefer not to build each scene manually. Indeed, 3D Basics 2 comes with a host of pre-built scenes through which you can simply browse and select a suitable landscape option. And while we are on the subject of pre-made extras, the program also offers a huge array of items with which you can decorate your designs, including no less that 900 3D objects and 300 shaders that you can simply drop straight into a world and then customise to your heart's content.

These are generous additions for the absolute beginner, complementing the useful collection of eight interactive training lessons that have been included to give a hands-on crash-course in modeling and rendering for the uninitiated.

However, perhaps the most important question to address is what exactly 3D Basics 2 is like to use. The answer is: pretty good. As you'd expect from such a low-end application, the interface is free from all those confusing tools that are crammed along the edges of screens in more advanced rendering apps, and in their place is a pared-down set of crucial controls that enable users to navigate the 3D world and intricately model objects. In fact, the latter aspect has been further improved from version one thanks to a reworked set of object manipulators, which offer much finer control over position, movement and scale within the world. In addition, spline work is also more precise thanks to the set of new tools that enable users to manipulate bevels and cross-sections in order to create more realistic shapes and elements.

That said, even with these new facilities, there's still nowhere near as much control and refinement as found in more high-end tools, and those who are looking to build 3D scenes absolutely from scratch will certainly find things a bit limiting. In fact, once you have become comfortable with how things work, the suite soon becomes all-too restrictive, meaning you're left wanting an awful lot more.

At this time, of course, you'll be ready to take another step up the 3D ladder and advance to a more flexible design tool, and Eovia is quick to jump in with a reduced upgrade offer to tempt you to move up to Carrara Standard. And it's not a particularly bad route to follow, although there is the inevitable danger that once you become too familiar with Carrara's tools and features, it may be something of a shock when you eventually (and somewhat inevitably) desire to migrate to another more capable package, such as the popular Lightwave or Cinema4D, where you'll have to learn the whole process again from scratch. ■

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: A solid introduction to the basics of 3D modeling

BAD: The tools soon begin to feel restrictive once you've initially learnt the ropes

★★★

In depth

Carrara 3D Basics 2 up close: an introduction to some of the most important new features

1 New image filters
3D Basics 2 offers a set of new and improved image filters, including a new anti-aliasing routine, which helps to boost the quality of final renders and make them appear much more realistic on screen.

2 OpenGL previews
If your computer is packing a dedicated 3D card from the likes of ATI or Nvidia, 3D Basics 2 will make use of its improved rendering power giving users slightly higher quality interactive previews.

3 New tree creator
3D Basics 2 also sports a brand new tree-making tool, which can be used to construct more life-like and organic growths with which you can add further realism to a nature based scene.

Software

Nero 7 Premium

DCA group test
Best buy

The new version of the popular disc burning and creativity software has arrived. We find out what's new under the hood…

Not all that long ago, disc-burning software was pretty uncomplicated. Indeed, in the days when Nero, the world's most popular CD-recording tool, started out, it pretty much consisted of one thing: the burning ROM. Arguably, this is the most important aspect of any recording package, since it's with this tool that you choose data to copy, set the burn options and then instruct to go ahead and create the disc.

The Nero burning ROM was pure, simple and extremely fast and effective; which is still true for the latest version that's included in Nero 7 Premium. It's just that now, the burning ROM has been dwarfed by the simply huge number of additional media tools that swell the ranks in this colossal home creativity package.

Nero 7 Premium aims to further its all-things-to-all-users ethos by bolstering and refining its already rather intimidating feature set. Packing a staggering 18 applications, no one can accuse Nero of being stingey with this release. Indeed, in terms of value for money there is little else out there that can match the sheer quantity of programs it has to offer. But of course, we all know that quantity is rarely a match for quality, so the true judge of Nero's worth is how effective and useful each of these applications is to the consumer. So, let's take a closer look at what's in store for purchasers.

The first thing you'll notice is that a small, approachable front-end called SmartStart holds the entire suite of apps together, which will be instantly familiar to Nero 6 users. This small dialog essentially groups creative tasks in categories such as Data, Audio and Video, which are listed along the top of the window. Once the mouse cursor is paused over an option, the main window displays a host of tasks within that genre that Nero can perform. To begin a task, all the user need do is click an icon and the appropriate Nero program will automatically launch. This design is both fast and intuitive, and really does help keep Nero Premium 7's huge list of programs from becoming too daunting.

For the majority of common burning procedures, you'll be making use of the aforementioned staple Nero tool, the Burning ROM. Now up to version 7, this application has undergone a bit of a transformation in terms of its interface in an effort to speed up workflow. Importantly, it features integration with another

SPECIFICATIONS
Nero 7 Premium
CONTACT: Nero
PRICE: £47.15
URL: www.nero.com
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS PC:
Windows 98 or higher
PIII 800MHz processor or higher
128Mb RAM
600Mb Hard drive space

Nero StartSmart 3

Look at the new version of Nero's user-friendly front end

1 Project categories
Nero's tools enable you to perform a large number of media tasks across a range of disciplines. Tasks are grouped together in categories, which can be selected by highlighting these icons at the top

2 Application links
If you want to launch a Nero program directly, you can find links to each item in the Applications and Nero Toolkit folders in the left corner of the interface

3 Pick a task
Each media task is given an individual icon, meaning users can simply find the task they want to perform here instead of having to guess which Nero program is required, then opening it manually from the Application list

4 Customise
Nero StartSmart 3 enables you to customise not only the colour scheme of the interface, but also whether it should display more advanced tasks more suitable for expert users

new tool, Nero Scout, which basically acts as an automatically updated archive of media files on your computer. Put simply, Nero Scout keeps accurate tabs on the contents of any media folders on your hard drive and then offers a streamlined database from which you can quickly select files for burning. And of course, it's useful for keeping a large collection of digital photos a bit more organised.

In addition, Burning ROM 7 also supports an increased number of CD formats, including Video CD, Super Video CD, Bootable CD, miniDVD and CD Extra. For DVD support, it's packing DVD ISO, DVD UDF, DVD ISO/UDF Bridge, bootable DVD, DVD Copy on-the-fly and DVD Images. Plus, there's even Blu-Ray support by way of BD-RE data recording and BD disc copy. And crucially, there's been a boost in performance, with the program now using fewer CPU cycles during the burn process to ensure your computer doesn't grind to a halt when copying a disc.

Another obvious new addition to the suite is Nero Home. This acts as yet another front-end with which you can take greater control over your media files. In practice, it looks and performs very much like the media UI found in Windows XP Media Center Edition, since it offers one-click access to audio, photos, movies and other data via a simplified, scalable window that has been designed to be viewed not only on the computer monitor, but also on

"There's a lot going on here... it represents great value for money"

standard or widescreen TVs. Why? Well, Nero Home hopes to be the hub from which you can access and stream videos and television broadcasts (assuming you have the relevant receiver hardware installed first, of course) in a bid to fully integrate the suite into your digital home. It can be controlled by remote (again, just like WXPMCE), sports TV time-shifting features and generally gives MCE a run for its money. For this, it works in conjunction with Nero MediaHome, an approachable server tool that takes care of streaming media to TVs or Hi-Fis plus also Universal Plug and Play devices. In practice, the Nero Home system is not quite there yet due mainly to it's rather ugly interface and unintuitive menu system.

But Nero 7 Premium is not all about integration and new UIs. There are other new apps that scream for the attention of media creators. Such as Nero SoundBox, a simplified music-maker that enables the user to put together sound sequences, and Nero PhotoSnap is an image-editing app that can help tweak dodgy digital snaps. Naturally, other tools like Nero CoverDesigner, BackItUp, InCD, Vision, WaveEditor, Express and ShowTime also receive welcome updates, reaffirming Nero's position as the king of versatility.

There's certainly a lot going on here, and when you consider that it's under £50, Nero Premium 7 represents great value for money. In our mind, it's worth it for the excellent new Burning ROM alone, but the additional tools and apps are the icing on the cake. They may not be the most powerful media creation programs around, but when viewed as a comprehensive bundle there's really little room for complaint. ■

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: An exhaustive feature-set and the fantastic Burning ROM makes this an essential purchase for creative disc-makers

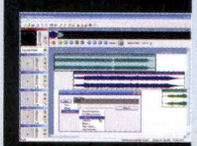
BAD: Some media tools are too simplistic to be any real use

★★★★★

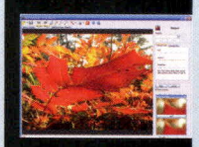
In depth

A closer look at some of Nero's best tools

1: Nero Home
This brand new app is designed to act like the Windows Media Center UI. It gives you direct access to your computer media and is perfectly capable of being viewed on a monitor or standard TV set thanks to its dynamically scalable fonts and icons.



2: Nero SoundTrax 2
This useful audio mixing program is great for creating customised music CDs. Use it to seamlessly blend tracks together, add audio effects and much more.



3: Nero PhotoSnap
This is Nero Premium 7's native image editor. Although it's nowhere near as capable or flexible as the likes of Photoshop Elements or Paint Shop Pro, it's useful for quickly tweaking common problems like colour casts or unsightly blurs.

Digital camera

Kodak EasyShare P880

The league of camera manufacturers producing user friendly prosumer models at affordable prices just got more competitive with the introduction of Kodak's P880

Now that the great megapixel race in the quality camera market has finally slowed, manufacturers are searching for new ways to tempt consumers.

Never one to rest on its laurels, Kodak is setting out to achieve this with its new Performance series. The company has taken its high-end models and simplified them to ease accessibility for amateurs, as a cheaper and less complicated alternative to DSLRs. The P880 offers an impressive 8-megapixel CCD, which is clearly a viable option for creatives who demand a high standard of photography, not to mention large format images.

The feature packed P880 has accessibility stamped all over it, and the 8-megapixel CCD and extended zoom had us salivating before we'd even got it out the box. The respectable f/2.8-f/4.1, 24mm-140mm wide-angle 5.8x all-glass Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon lens isn't only a mouthful but gives users an eyeful with its expansive picture-taking capability. Enhanced by an optical manual zoom and focus rings, it's safely separated from its lower league competitors.

Underlining its commitment to its bespoke EasyShare system, Kodak has not dispensed with automatic scene modes, even for its more advanced Performance series models. The 11 options offer quick focusing times and marked differences in their treatments of colour and clarity. Although fiddly to use, these scene modes do at least ensure the camera offers wide user appeal and is versatile enough to adapt as its users grow in expertise.

In action, the Kodak all but lives up to the mighty promises made by its manufacturer. Thanks to its (rather bulky) body design, the P880 is a stable performer when operated in a handheld position. Useful touches, such as its mighty 2.5" LCD screen, make it extremely accessible for new users.

The manually adjustable zoom lens offers a worthwhile stab at satisfying prosumer needs, and is responsive enough to exemplify the clear benefits of this system as opposed to electronic zooming mechanisms. In this respect the Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon lens holds up well under pressure, offering sustained clarity in a range of diverse shooting situations as well as ensuring a fast focusing time. When it comes to exposure, this too shines with the many advantages that manual maneuverability offers. Colours are vibrant, showing clear reproduction of a full spectrum. This is matched by a wide tonal range that displays fine and subtle graduation.

The P880 certainly isn't the sexiest camera on the market (Kodak's traditional approach to bulky camera design is evident as ever in the P880) but it does handle well, even in novice hands, and offers a great range of features that will doubtless appeal to all levels of users. Its true value lies in such versatility, and this, combined with a mammoth 8-megapixel CCD ensures that the P880 will prove a wise buy for snappers looking to generate creative results from their photography hobby. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Kodak EasyShare P880

PRICE (inc VAT): £449.99

URL: www.kodak.com

RECORDED MEGAPIXELS: 8.3

EFFECTIVE MEGAPIXELS: 8.0

ZOOM: 5.8 x optical

LENS DATA: f/2.8-f/4.1 (24 –140mm, 35mm equivalent)

FOCAL RANGE: normal AF, wide and tele: 50 cm – infinity/25cm

MAX RESOLUTION: 3264 x 2448 pixels

ISO RANGE: Auto, 50 - 1600

STORAGE: 32MB internal, SD/MMC storage media

DIMENSIONS: 116 x 97 x 91mm

WEIGHT: 513g

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: A great camera for photographers who demand quality but aren't ready or willing to take on a DSLR. A responsive auto mode means you can't go wrong.

BAD: Not a very sexy or stylish looking camera and is a little dated in looks. Additionally, irritating clicking noises are reminiscent of a cheap mobile camera phone.

★★★★

Software

3D Buzz Mastering Maya: The fundamentals

Using 3DBuzz Mastering Maya, you too can discover whether you have what it takes to become a true master of Maya

Following a written tutorial is a great way of learning skills at your own pace. But ometimes there's no substitute for watching the real masters at work, and that's exactly the thinking behind 3D Buzz's latest release, Mastering Maya: The Fundamentals.

Jason Busby, a certified instructor for Alias and expert of Maya, 3D Studio Max and XSI, has been using these programs for over eight years. He has worked in character animation and you can find examples of his work on his own website **www.3dbuzz.com**. Zach Perish is a Graphic Designer who has been teaching 3D for over three years, and originally learnt Maya from Jason. Together they worked for over six months to compile this course and have included many of the skills they have both acquired throughout their years in the industry.

Jason and Zach take viewers through the fundamentals of mastering Maya in a complex course of over 400 different videos, covering three different projects from start to finish. From the basics of creating a simple bouncing ball animation through to building an alien abduction scene, the projects are as varied as they are valuable. In addition, viewers are shown how to participate in an online Buzz network course. Through logging into a secure site, members can join in the Maya Fundamentals class where an archive of further walkthrough videos present more techniques, and enable learners to discuss topics with other like minded members.

Thankfully, the teaching techniques used within the DVD are informal, entertaining, engaging, concise and most importantly, to-the-point. Listening to the commentary is never dull because the tutors speak with real enthusiasm and encouragement.

The course leaders promise their teachings will turn the absolute beginner into a master by making their students live, dream, sleep and breathe Maya. From preliminary theories of 3D space to what the user interface looks like, all the way to intermediate and advanced level covering topics on lighting, rendering modeling and much more. It will also inform you on how you can get hold of and install the Maya PLE, which is an easily accessible demo version.

The journey the course takes will introduce users to a comprehensive range of concepts to ensure they become extremely comfortable creating their own projects from scratch using Maya. It may sound like a steep learning curve, but you will amaze yourself at the progress that can be made in such a short space of time. With around 80 hours of guidance, walkthrough tutorials will familiarise you with every new theory introduced, making sure you have a thorough understanding of each concept before the DVD moves onto the next. Jason and Zach even make use of an onscreen white board to demonstrate techniques and trace diagrams in some of the steps. It's an extremely powerful course and a real must for all those out there that have a true interest in learning one of the most advanced 3D modeling programs out there. ■

"Students live, dream, sleep and breathe Maya"

SPECIFICATIONS
3D Buzz Mastering Maya: The Fundamentals

AVAILABLE DIRECT FROM: www.3dbuzz.com

PRICE: $249.99

OPERATING SYSTEMS: Windows and Mac

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Quicktime or Windows Media Player

RUNNING TIME: 82 hours approx

DCA VERDICT

Good: delivery of instruction and quality of guidance is very high

Bad: relatively low number of featured projects considering length of tuition

★★★★

This new multimedia software is worthy of more than just an Oscar nomination

Announcing Nero 7 Premium. Become your own director with this revolutionary software and experience exciting and fascinating home entertainment. Simple and relaxed capturing and editing of your personal video files – for any file format. Include impressive effects and create original transitions. Burn your own individual video CDs and DVDs and surprise your friends and acquaintances. Nero 7 Premium will turn you into a genuine "film star". Nero 7 Premium also enables you to reach for the stars with all other digital media. Whether audio, photo, music, data or TV files – with Nero 7 Premium you can combine a wide range of media. With just one multimedia software!

Nero 7 Premium – Perfect casting all round!

www.nero.com

BURN

CREATE

EDIT

SHARE

ENJOY

With scanners as our shields and graphic tablets as our swords we prepare ourselves for daily creative combat. We want it all, we want it fast and we want it in colour! *DCA* hurtles to your aid as we test out the latest in affordable scanners...

Which came first the company or the consumer? Did the manufacturer invent the products, or did the designer demand a higher calibre of weaponry?

It should come as no surprise to artists grafting in the digital world that the demand for speed, quality and efficiency at affordable prices is growing, forcing technology empires to battle it out in an electronic space race to reinvent the traditional pieces of equipment to gain a fraction more market share.

One such product to get a winter overhaul is the consumer flatbed scanner. With dozens to choose from it's almost impossible to know where to begin so we've put four of the leading budget models through their paces. Canon, Epson, HP and Lexmark are all leaders in this field, but who will emerge victorious in this cut throat battle of quality and performance?

It is commonly accepted that flatbed scanners are the most beneficial for designers because they allow scanning of any object that fits under the lid, enabling users to import various textures and materials. The important factors to consider when buying a scanner are; resolution, colour quality, maximum density, driver interface and computer connection.

For acceptable quality you'll need an optical resolution of at least 2,700 dpi creating files of around 20 MB, which is adequate for an A3 print. Quality is determined by many factors including dynamic range (number of colours) so look for a scanner offering a 48-bit depth. Maximum density refers to the sensitivity of the in-built sensor, chose a model that has at least 3.6 density. Scanners come packaged with their own software but will vary in quality and scope. It is worth road testing the software before you buy, as some models will only work with their own interfaces. In terms of computer connection there are four main options but USB is the most widely used.

The scanners' performances were graded on colour, clarity, usability, speed and features.

PRODUCTS

HP Scanjet 4890

Canon CanoScan 8400F

Epson Perfection 4490

Lexmark P4350

Canon CanoScan 8400F

Canon has a reputation for producing high quality consumer kit, but will the 8400F be up to par?

There is no doubt about it, this scanner is perfect for the creative looking for machinery that performs to expectation and looks kitsch. Total eye candy, the CanoScan 8400F has a sleek part–metal, part–plastic exterior, in silver and midnight blue. It's excellently crafted and thankfully doesn't consume too much desk space.

Getting started doesn't throw up too many obstacles, although the essential bundled software can be time consuming and tricky to install. Like its esteemed rivals in our flatbed scanner test, the Canon also comes with slide holders that facilitate 35mm film scans.

As well as the scanner's automatic post scan adjustments, Canon has included Adobe's Photoshop Elements 2.0 software for slightly more advanced image editing options, but on the whole, the Canon is still a very basic package for the demanding digital creative.

Out of the four units tested this model proves you don't have to be loud and proud to meet a high standard. The 8400F was by far the quietest scanner we tested, which is a great bonus if your creative thoughts are sensitive to audible interruptions.

The machine operates very quickly and clarity is not a problem for the 8400F. Easily refreshing old photos and outputting accurate colour rendition, the unit proves it's a worthy contender when it comes to tangible results.

Aside from Elements, the image editing options on offer courtesy of the 8400F are good enough to achieve the basic changes you'd demand from a scanner. With histograms, hue and saturation controls, and brightness and contrast, the staple edits are catered for. The only downside is that previews are too small to view changes and once you commit you can't go back.

The multi-scan feature, as with our other scanners, is a godsend. The feature works better on the HP but here it's adequate enough to make your life that bit easier.

A key disadvantage to this machine though is it's split personality. Most the time it will work fine, and then all of a sudden it will throw up its hands and refuse to work. This is only for seconds, and is very rare, but if you have a large workflow this could cause problems. ■

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: The CanoScan 8400F offers a fast, efficient, and quality assured service. The design is so sexy you'll be hard pushed to stop stroking it.

BAD: Unless you have binoculars for lenses you won't be able to view the changes in the post scan adjustments menu, and if you regret the changes you'll need to go back and scan it in all over again.

★★★★

Epson Perfection 4490

Epson has been a frequent *DCA* Labs winner, but will the Perfection 4490 carry on its legacy?

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: Light and cute the Epson performs adequately well. Multi-scan and Photoshop Elements both help its case.

BAD: Light on features, and is not as straightforward as the other scanners. The colour and quality of scans are far from perfection.

★★★

The lightest of our four scanners, the Perfection 4490 had a lot to prove in order to live up to its name. Perhaps trying to mimic the look of the CanoScan and replicate the design of the HP Scanjet, the Epson failed on both accounts. Ill crafted and without the clean professionalism of the HP, it could double as a punishment device for naughty children, as the lid SNAPS down so fast it'll take a few injuries to get used to it.

The software seems to take an age to install. Like the Canon, the 4490 comes with Photoshop Elements, which is arguably better than other own-branded post scan software, but takes a while to fully install the program.

After 40 minutes of laborious scanner installation we were up and running. Unfortunately the excitement was short lived as the Epson proved one of the least user-friendly models in this test and sadly didn't come up to scratch on any of the tests. Disappointing, as the 4490 was equal in expense to the HP.

Intriguingly, the scanning software gives users three categories of use: Home, Auto and Professional. The Home option is incredibly patronising with picture icons to explain what each function is responsible for, and the Professional option is so overtly pretentious without reason it is actually laughable.

Previews are fairly quick and the pre-scan options are adequate. There are large thumbnails (better than the CanoScan) so you can actually see the changes. However, when you choose a selection the scanner will automatically make changes based on the category you have selected (Home etc) which can be irritating if you want various styles on a large amount of pictures. Attempting to redeem itself the Perfection 4490 does multi-scan with panache, which as previously mentioned is a must if you have a high workflow.

The disappointment didn't end there as the scans were dull and colour was the least accurate out of the four machines tested.

The resolution was acceptable, but again was probably one of the end runners in our review.

Although it's affordable, sadly the scanner is not on par with its contemporaries. ■

HP Scanjet 4890

The HP is an appealing sleek metallic scanner, but does it have substance as well as style?

Just by getting the Scanjet 4890 out of its box you'll be immediately drawn to its professional looks. With a shiny metal cover and sturdy exterior the 4890 exudes durability. Even though it was the heaviest of our units it was ultimately the most attractive.

Out of the four units in this group test the HP was by far the quickest to set up and install. Additionally it was the easiest to use, and scanned in impressively quick times even at a high resolution.

The scans displayed amazing colour and clarity, especially from old or faded photos. However some scans embodied a slight grain-like texture which is disappointing when compared to some of the other scanners, especially the Lexmark which is £100 cheaper and offers greater clarity.

This scanner comes with so many features it's hard to know where to begin. The preview features offer crop, restoration of faded colour, rotation, invertion, mirror, and dust and scratch removal. The post-scan features include; share, stitch, slideshow, export, edit. Then in the adjustments menu there are a wide range of easy to use controls for adding photographic filters, hue saturation, setting white balance, adding soft glow, and plenty more.

The best thing about this HP model is the multi-scan option which allows users to scan several images at once - just remember to be careful to space out photos to prevent confusing the machine. Unlike the Canon you can adjust images before you scan and the post-scan screen is larger with more extensive editing options compared to the Canon. However, if you regret committing to the changes and use the undo feature, all your changes will be carefully removed.

On the whole the Scanjet performed well enough to meet our expectations, establishing itself in a league of its own. A worthwhile investment for creatives who need reliability and quality. ■

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: This scanner rewards its users with excellent quality, and a packed feature set. It works fast, and the multi-scan feature saves precious time.

BAD: It's the longest and heaviest scanner featured so make sure you have lots of desk space to house it.

★★★★★

Lexmark P4350

The only all-in-one in our group test, will the Lexmark match up to the heavyweight flatbeds?

DCA VERDICT

GOOD: Holds a large scanning service area, and is equipped with easy to use function buttons. The fact the P4350 accepts memory cards as well as USB makes our day.

BAD: Painstakingly slow, and has problems connecting. The pre and post scan features are more limited than the competitors mentioned here.

★★★★

If you're playing 'spot the odd one out' we're sure you will have recognised that this scanner is different to our other three flatbeds. At the budget end of the market there are few manufacturers producing dedicated models. The alternative of course is an all-in-one, which doubles up as a copier and printer.

Comparing the P4350 to the others is arguably like comparing a VW Combi van to a Ferrari, Porsche and Jaguar. This bulky but multi-functional device compromises speed for functions, but still has a growing number of fans in technology circles.

Lexmark prides itself on producing quality machinery at affordable prices, which is perfect if you're just starting out in the design world, and are seeking cost effective equipment.

Looking at the P4350 you'll notice its bulky and tacky white plastic exterior, which seems to lack the kudos of the HP and Canon. When it performs as a scanner, the unit is unsurprisingly the slowest in the group but the pleasing part is that it only runs a second or two behind the Epson.

Unexpectedly the Lexmark offers the best standard of scan on colour art. The colour and clarity on numerous scans was far superior to that produced by our other contenders.

However, the results of the black and white photo test told a different story. These scans emit a disappointing brown tinged and conveyed a muted clarity.

One of the significant bonuses of this machine is you don't have to use a computer to view the scanned images, thanks to an on-body LCD screen. Although this screen is on the small side, it does manage to deliver an accurate reflection of colour and contrast.

Lexmark Imaging Studio is the fancy name for the post-scan software. It gives users a good range of standard features including red eye removal, colour enhancements and dust and scratch reduction, as well as wielding other must-have functions.

Thankfully this scanner allowed users to uninstall with the least amount of hassle in our group test.

Overall the Lexmark P4350 is more than capable of delivering high quality scans, and when you consider that it delivers other features including printing and copying, it offers definite value for money for the creative on a budget. ■

The winner is...

Staying ahead of the game is an overused, but very true cliché for technology companies and creatives alike. Due to an increasingly overcrowded marketplace, design professionals have to be as original, fast and reliable as their technology will allow. That is why it's so important to invest in quality equipment even when you're on a budget, and this review proves it is still achievable. The Lexmark is incredibly good value as long as you can cope with a slower performance. If you can afford it, the Canon or HP are really worth the added expense. Although in the post review comparison the clarity of some of the HP scans weren't as up to scratch as we hoped, but the majority delivered above and beyond.

Quality scanners will allows users to digitalise a range of textures and materials at an acceptable resolution, which will perhaps secure an angle or idea your competitors have overlooked. The HP Scanjet 4890 allows you to do this in an easy to use manner.

There are more scanners available than ever before. Like designers, companies need to diversify to stay in business whether it's camera manufacturers producing scanners, or vice versa it seems every producer wants to stick its grubby mitts into every pie going. Our advice is don't be fooled by any half-baked designs. If you want quality, stick with a quality producer.

All four scanners we reviewed were spawned from well-established companies with a proven record of quality and performance. But the winning scanner is tangible proof that real quality is affordable, even with a budget of less than two hundred pounds.

SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL	CanoScan 8400F	Perfection 4490	Scanjet 4890	P4350
MANUFACTURER	Canon	Epson	HP	Lexmark
URL	www.canon.co.uk	www.epson.co.uk	www.hp.com	www.lexmark.co.uk
PRICE	£149.99	£199	£199	£99.99
SCANNER TYPE	Flatbed	Flatbed	Flatbed	All-in-one
MAX OPTICAL RES	3200 x 6400 dpi	Main 4800 x Sub 9400 dpi	4800 dpi	1200 x 2400 dpi
COLOUR DEPTH	48 bit	48 bit	48 bit	48 bit
PREVIEW SPEED	5 seconds	7 seconds	6 seconds	8 seconds
SCAN SPEED	8 seconds (4 x 6 colour photo)	10 seconds (4 x 6 colour photo)	9 seconds (4 x 6 colour photo)	15 seconds (4 x 6 colour photo)
MAX SCAN SIZE	216 x 297 mm	216 x 297 mm	220 x 315 mm	216 x 297 mm
MULTISCAN	YES	YES	YES	NO
INTERFACE	USB 2.0	USB 2.0	USB 2.0	USB 2.0 and card reader
DIMENSIONS	278 x 500 x 122 mm	272 x 475 x 113 mm	505 x 300 x 107 mm	177.5 x 435 x 334 mm
WEIGHT	4.4 kg	4 kg	5.07 kg	4.8 kg
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★	★★★½☆	★★★★★	★★★★★
COLOUR	★★★★½	★★★½☆	★★★★½	★★★★★
CLARITY	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★½	★★★½☆	★★★★★	★★½☆☆
SPEED	★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★★½	★★★½☆	★★★★★	★★★½☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★½

DCA group test Best buy

competition

EPSON SCANNERS AND VUESCAN SOFTWARE!

Isn't it annoying when your scanner software lacks the functionality, power and those little extra features that have a tremendous effect on the quality of your scans? Even if you have a high-end scanner it doesn't necessarily mean that you have a scanner 'driver' that will get the best from your images.

Hamrick Software is a leading developer in third party software for scanners. VueScan was first released in 1999, and through word of mouth has acquired over 120,000 users. Unlike other drivers, it is not dedicated to any one particular scanner model – and actually supports over 400 scanners and 185 digital camera raw files, and is constantly growing. In addition, when you purchase a copy of the software you can use it on up to four different scanners, meaning you can continue to use it if you decide to upgrade your scanner.

Highlights of the software include multiple bit depths and multiple passes, the option to manually focus your scanner for optimum sharpness, individual channel brightness control and multiple-output colour spaces, infrared detection of surface defects allowing for automatic removal (dust and scratches), colour fading / restoration and grain reduction and colour, exposure and sharpening controls.

Once installed, VueScan will automatically detect any compatible model plugged into your computer. Once running, a set of core tools gives you the option to scan 8-bit or 16-bit images (depending on your scanner). This means that the quality of your final image is really down to your scanner, and not the software that is driving it. As a result of this, many people purchase VueScan to make their old scanner work as well as a new one. VueScan supports Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. It has a broad range of tools and a logically ordered interface, what more could you ask for?

There are two versions – Professional and Standard. The Standard edition ($49.95) comes with one year of free upgrades, and Professional ($89.95) gives you lifetime upgrades and the additional features of RAW scan files, ICC profiles and IT8 colour calibration. To fully test and purchase VueScan visit www.hamrick.com for a trial.

win!

Q: What year was VueScan software launched?

a) 1997
b) 1998
c) 1999

The closing date for this competition is 08/02/2006. The competition is open to UK residents only. Highbury Entertainment reserves the right to substitute prize stated if unavailable for one of similar or higher value. The draw shall take place on 15/02/2006. The winner should allow up to 28 days for delivery and shall be notified by post. The Editor's decision is final.

VueScan
the image is everything

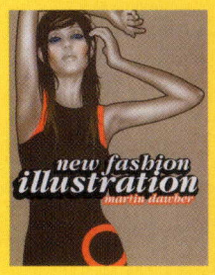
Competition details

Digital Creative Arts and **Hamrick Software** have come together to give away five Epson Perfection 3590 scanners each with a copy of the Standard Edition VueScan Software, and 50 runners-up will also get a copy! All you need to do is answer the question below and send your answer on a postcard with your name and address to: VueScan Competition, Digital Creative Arts Magazine, Highbury Entertainment Ltd, 117 South Way, Southwell Business Park, Portland, Dorset, DTS 2NJ

new books

New Fashion Illustration

Author: Martin Dawber
Publisher: Chrysalis Books Group
ISBN: 0713489618
Price: £17.99
www.batsford.com

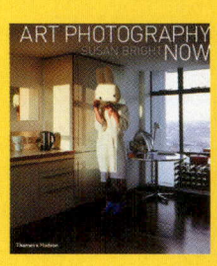


A bible for fashion illustrators everywhere, this indispensable guide reveals how to combine the traditional aspects of design (drawing, painting, collage and embroidery) with contemporary computer aided media. Consisting of hundreds of portfolios from designers' worldwide, this book will revolutionise the way you perceive fashion. Order New Fashion Illustration now and get £2.00 off with free UK p&p. Call 0870 787 1613, quoting reference CH448 to secure your discounted copy.

★★★★★

Art Photography Now

Author: Susan Bright
Publisher: Thames & Hudson Ltd
ISBN: 0500543054
Price: £29.95
www.thamesandhudson.com

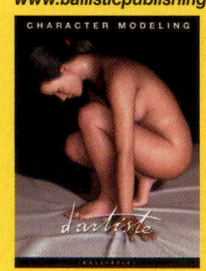


Presenting 80 of the world's best-known and respected photographers and their stunning collections of work. Organised into seven contemporary sections the art is intuitively powerful and illustrates the distinct edge these professionals harness. A provocative and detailed hard back for keen photographers and enthusiasts.

★★★★

d'artiste: Character Modeling

Authors: Francisco A. Cortina, Pascal Blanché, Steven Stahlberg
Publisher: Ballistic Publishing
ISBN: 1-921002-11-5
Price: $55 (£31)
www.ballisticpublishing.com



3D character modelling masters Pascal Blanché, Francisco A. Cortina and Steven Stahlberg individually present their own character modelling techniques through a series of step-by-step tutorials from concept to creation. Artist sections include a gallery of the artist's work and thoughts in their own words, tutorials, and an invited artist gallery featuring 94 character-modelling creations from some of the most talented 3D character artists. If you like this check out Exposé 3 and Elemental 2.

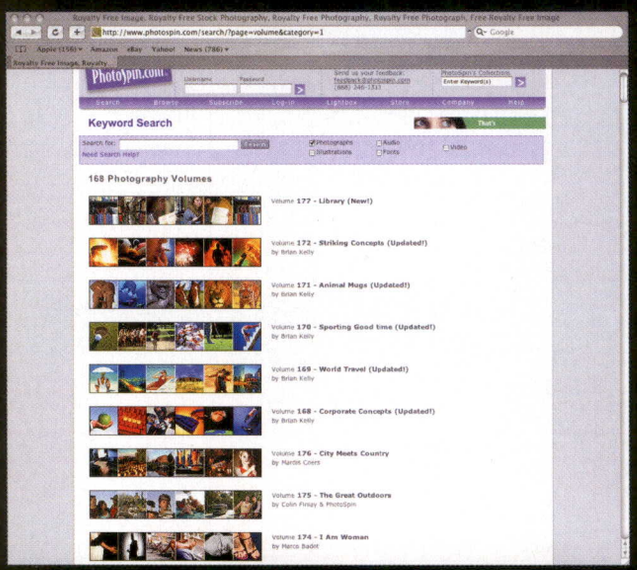
★★★★

Stock art

PhotoSpin.com

www.photospin.com

It's rare to stumble across an Internet site that offers it all, and then proceeds to show you the Internet equivalent of the backroom.



Stocked to the brim, PhotoSpin.com offers a royalty free bonanza of illustrations, photographs, audio and video clips. The company's key selling point is its unique approach to sales. PhotoSpin operates an 'all you can eat' policy whereby members make a one-off payment and then download as many files as they can stomach.

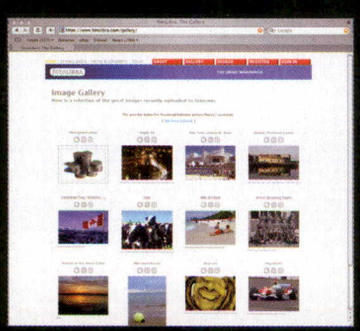
The photographs are of excellent quality, colour and interest. Some of the illustrations are basic but with thousands to decide between it's doubtful you'll go away empty handed. The 162 and growing font volumes are worth the membership fee alone. For the sound and video geeks among you there are thousands of audio files (from a jet taking off to a dog panting) and video files (driving along the Golden Gate bridge to war footage) so everyone's a winner. This gold-mine is probably best utilised by a professional or keen animator who is sourcing material for a whole package.

Prices vary depending on the quality users need for output. A years' subscription to a web image package costs $199 (£113), for print quality images $249 (£169), and for both $299 (£169). ★★★★★

Fotolibra.com

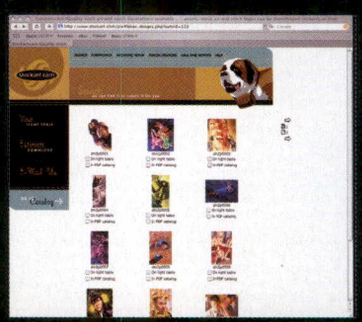
www.fotolibra.com

Sticking with the royalty free theme, there's a new kid on the block in the shape of fotolibra.com. Catering for two camps (members and researchers) fotolibra.com is free to join and caters for amateur as well as pro users. It's perfect for image-hunters seeking an outlet for their wares (members), and image-hungry illustrators looking for new stock photos (researchers). Members can make money from their collections, whilst retaining the copyright. Researchers can also purchase prints in a wide range of mediums including a standard 6 x 4" print at 45p, to an A3 colour poster, or even a novelty four pack of unique coasters for £20. ★★★★★



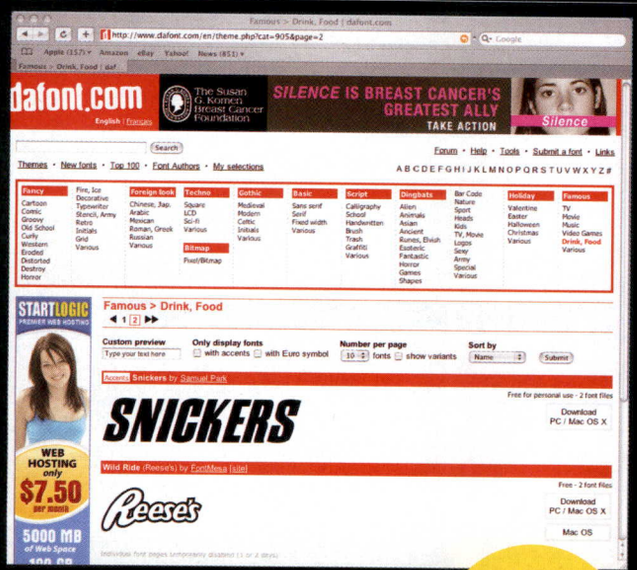
stockart.com

www.stockart.com



Stockart.com is an alliance of illustrators with a shared passion for promoting their work. Just like fotolibra.com members can either cash in by selling their portfolios online, or become consumers and purchase some unique art for personal or commercial projects. If you find an illustrator whose style you admire you can even commission them for a specific commission. Library images come in two categories - royalty free and some rights managed and if nothing else the site is a hotbed for inspiration. There's hundreds of styles, designs and ideas, so if you want some motivation, log on to check out the competition. ★★★★

Fonts



dafont.com

www.dafont.com

Featuring a plethora of amazing fonts, from cutting edge designs to vintage classics, dafont has da best freebies. This is a modest but extremely professional site with a hip styling, offering hundreds of themes containing dozens of free quirky and useful fonts. The excellent quality and easily accessible functions should be enough to sell this site alone, but the fact that some fonts come with instructions and tutorials is like finding an extra present in your Christmas stocking.

Some of our favourites themes are 'Graffiti', 'Old School' and 'Comic'. If you're looking for something of an adult nature we suggest you take a cheeky peek at 'Sexy'. The piece de la resistance however, falls firmly in the 'Famous' section, with logos from TV, film, music, food and drink, it has a random but fun selection with everything from the Hard Rock Café to the Care Bear Family – genius! ★★★★★

recommended

1001freefonts.com

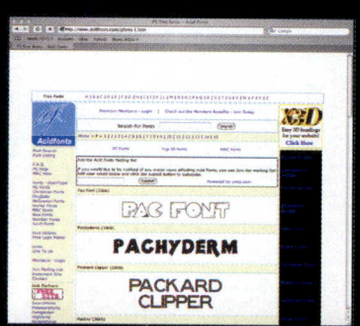
www.1001freefonts.com

Don't let the name fool you, this simple yet effective website doesn't just offer 1001 fonts, log on and you'll find a whopping 3,300. As the author regularly updates and uploads additional fonts on to the site, the total has been steadily increasing over the years. There is an option to buy more exclusive fonts, but we recommend wading through the bargain bin and grabbing the freebie fonts first. There is definitely something for everyone, and it always nice getting something for nothing. Failing that try using the site's font creator program to generate an original font of your own making. If you're still at a loss, the helpful font-loving people at 1001freefonts.com have an comprehensive list of links to point you in the right direction. ★★★

acidfonts.com

www.acidfonts.com

This fun, simple site offers a hamper load of free fonts - 4,700 to be exact. It has all the frills and spills to get your heart racing, including frequently asked questions, links to other font bearing sites and best of all the chance to download Xara 3d- ooh ah! As well as standard serif and sans serif fonts, there's also a whole host of fun special editions, including Christmas, Halloween and sci-fi themed fonts. As we are all consummate creative professionals, we aren't afraid of a little hard work, in fact our motto should be 'If you want something doing, do it yourself", so the 3D font maker is essential for those considering building your own type. Try experimenting with the trial version and you'll soon reap the benefits of creating your own unique designs ★★★

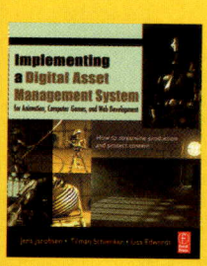


new books

Implementing a Digital Asset Management System:

For Animation, Computer Games and Web Development

Authors: Jens Jacobsen, Tilman Schlenker, Lisa Edwards
Publisher: Focal Press
ISBN: 0240806654
Price: £34.99
www.focalpress.com

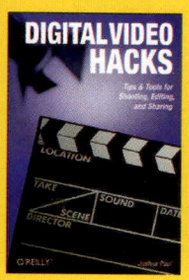


Written by the professionals who created a Digital Asset Management System for the crew on Monsters Inc and Medal of Honor, this book couldn't have come more from the horse's mouth. It's a challenging but crucial read for anyone who wants to run a successful computer based media production. With information on improving workflow, digital content security, speed-to-market, and profit margin for projects large and small.

★★★★

Digital Video Hacks

Author: Joshua Paul
Publisher: O'Reilly
ISBN: 0596009461
Price: £20.95
www.oreilly.com

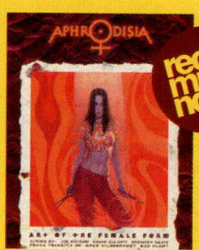


Catering for the one-man-band, this 426 page bible is bubbling with digital video techniques and tips for acquiring, mixing, editing, accessorising, and distributing your film footage. This is perfect for solo hobbyists and keen amateurs, as the informative book guides you effortlessly through each stage in the movie making process.

★★★★

Aphrodisia: Art of the female form

Editor: Craig Elliott
Publisher: Aristata Publishing
ISBN: 0975491229
Price: £16.17
www.aristatapublishing.com



recommended

A provocative and breath taking selection of art celebrating the beauty and variety of the female form. This extraordinary showcase incorporating a great deal of digitally created art, depicts women in all sizes, all races, all ages and all scenarios. From the mystical to the menacing, from the sexual to the innocent every angle has been included. A truly inspirational read.

★★★★★

must-see sites

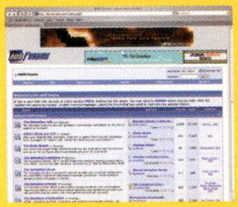
BBC film network
www.bbc.co.uk/filmnetwork/

If you're a budding filmmaker you should be using and abusing this site as regularly as you have a creative vision. The caring and sharing ethos of the BBC has extended to the far reaches of the Internet ,as this site delivers everything you need to know as a filmmaker with advice on the creative process from start to finish. The site provides an essential platform to screen your work, and allows you to view and rate the competition as you see fit. This is truly an unmissable site for film makers everywhere, offering many worthwhile links to film festivals, a writers room, BBC new talent, film making forums, funding schemes, competitions and much, much more.

recommended

★★★★★

AWN Forum
http://forums.awn.com



The strangely named AWN forum is an easy to navigate and user-friendly website dedicated to facilitating communication between animators the in every corner of the globe. It's a simple idea, but one that is extremely effective thanks to a straightforward design and some no-nosense organisation. The site is worth a read even for non-members, who will find it invaluable for keeping up with new trends, discover fresh skills and find new contacts. The forum pages of this popular site have thousands of threads and posts, encouraging the most reserved animator to have a rant. Our favourites are 'AWN Show and Tell' and 'Animation Flea Market'.

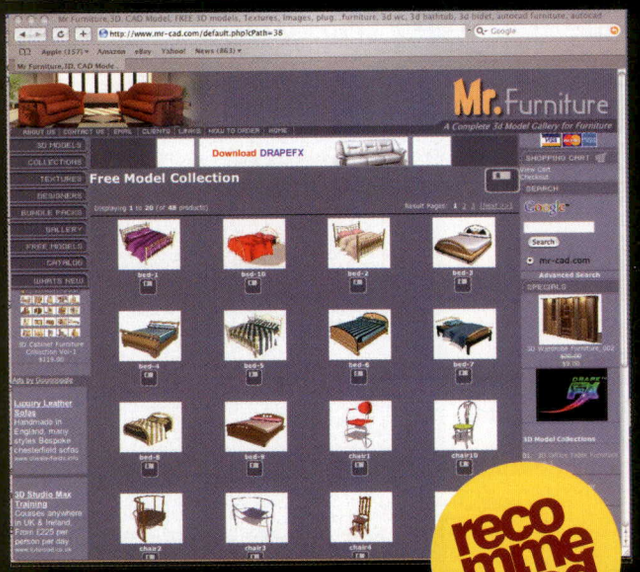
★★★

ephotozine
www.ephotozine.com

Perhaps the best kept secret on the web for amateur and professional photographers, ephotozine is an essential resource for all those of us who find themselves occasionally working behind a lens. The site offers hundreds of accessible tutorial workshops at the click of a mouse, and is endlessly useful for photographers or animators requiring a one-off no-nonsense form of advice on completing projects or using tools. The site covers basic, but often forgotten useful skills. Our particular attention was drawn to creating your own watermark, an essential technique in today's online society, where digital creatives of all persuations frequently display their wares.

★★★

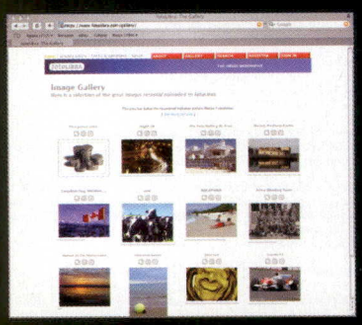
3D models



Mr Furniture
www.mr-cad.com

This is a fantastic 3D modelling gallery stacked full of furniture for architects and interior designers with a passion for CAD. Mr Furniture is devoted to the creation of 3D models for use in 3D architectural designs for home and business.

The site ventures exclusive catalogues of interior furnishings with a virtual reality feel. From pine tables to stainless steel cutlery, the site has all the large-scale commodities right down to the most minute fixtures and fittings. The texture detail is so believable you feel tricked in to wondering if it is a photography or art. Take a wonder through the menu bars and you'll also be able to view dozens of freebies. Mr Furniture is even offering a promotional discount, so check out the site for some bargains. ★★★★



3D Valley
www.3dvalley.com

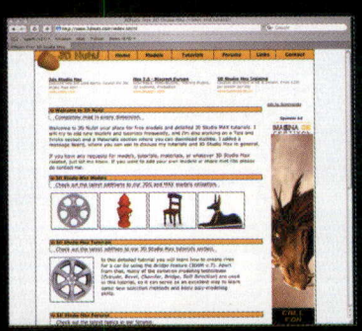
3D Valley is one of the largest and most complete link directories and additionally hosts hundreds fascinating free models, textures, tutorials, plug-ins, 3D modelling and rendering software.

Users can take advantage of the bundle of unique downloads on offer, access one of the sister sites via a simple link or read detailed information on the featured artist of the month. These exclusive interviews and accompanying online portfolios are backlogged proving to be a fantastic resource for industry tips and insights. Additionally the site creators run a book review section, praising and slating the latest literary offerings to the 3D modelling community. Unlike many of it's rivals, the site creators regularly update the site with news and images to keep users returning to the vibrant forum, book review page, and free images. 3D Valley isn't the most professional or freebie packed site out there, but it is definitely worth book marking for the occasional tip, review, or free model. ★★★

3D Nuts
www.3dnuts.com

Out of the three sites featured here, 3D Nuts is punching a little above its weight. It isn't flashy or the most useful resource page but it has an underdog charm that should serve your basic needs. The site's authors have produced and presented several informative video tutorials, which are perfect if you haven't quite got to grips with a variety of the basic principles of 3D design. Even logging on once a month could add a string of new skills to your animator's bow. The expert team behind the 3D Nuts website provides a hands-on teacher approach to it's members, asking visitors to submit modelling questions, and attempt to respond to every one of them with accurate and helpful information.

There are dozens of free images to boot, and many royalty free models too, for every unique and generic purpose, made with poly-modelling techniques. This unique site is a winner in our eyes. ★★★



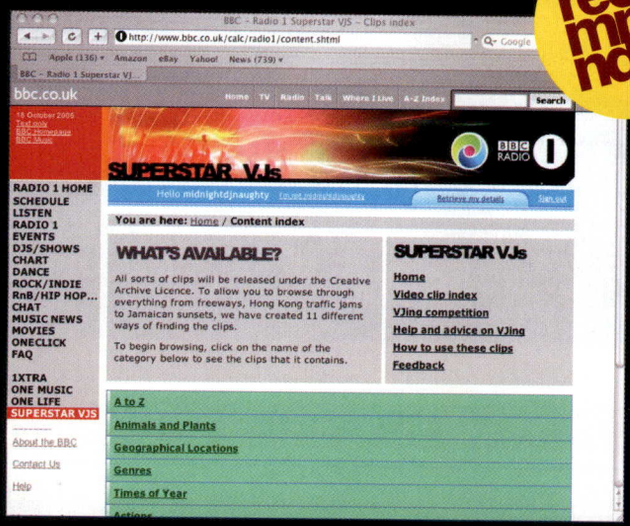
Film footage

Superstar VJs

www.bbc.co.uk/calc/radio1/index.shtml

The generous people behind the BBC website have created a video footage site that allows you to download any of 100 unusual film clips for free.

The footage has been especially chosen with video jockeys in mind, meaning the majority of the footage runs under three minutes and is audioless. Nevertheless the clips are clear, crisp, emotive and interesting. From beautiful Jamaican sunsets to wild animals roaming free, there is something to represent the mood of any song. It's a straightforward case of registering, agreeing to the terms and conditions, and then downloading your chosen video clips. Once you have searched or used the directory to find a clip you like, you can read the synopsis or view the storyboard to aid your decision before you download. This is a service which is available for free for users who can download files using Windows Media, Quicktime, or MPEG, making this site easily accessible for millions of people.



In addition to this service, the Beeb is running a VJ competition, check online for more information, but in the essence of the gig is that participants need to make a three minute VJ mix from the clips provided on the site to be in with a chance of winning a live mix on 1Xtra. ★★★★★

Buyout Footage

www.buyoutfootage.com

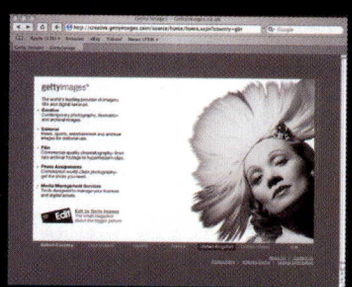
Buyout Footage is a popular US stock footage house, selling royalty free full-length public domain films and archive film stock footage.

This is an easy to navigate site with standard preview and purchase functions, selling an interesting and emotive range of video clips. The libraries are separated into two categories, Contemporary and Historical, which include footage from many notable events and occasions such as wars, movies, world events and family collections.

The company also represents several larger footage libraries and have access to thousands of hours of stock film, available for traditional usage licensing. ★★★★

gettyimages

http://creative.gettyimages.com



Gettyimages claims to be the "worlds leading provider of imagery, film and digital services." We like it because it offers commercial, high quality cinematography from rare and archival footage to hypermodern clips, many of which are Royalty Free. Rights Managed footage is also available if you have a bigger budget for your project. As with other sites, you can download previews of the clips before buying. The impressive range increases in cost with the higher the quality you need. The majority range from £85 to £225 so pick carefully. Amongst the clips are several digitally enhanced clips which can be very impressive and certainly worth a look. ★★★★

plug-ins

Plugin.com

www.plugin.com

recommended

Claiming to be the world's largest online plug-in catalogue, Plugin.com has a wealth of resources ready for you to exploit, but have your credit card handy as these accessories aren't cheap. Specialising in plug-ins for audio, 3D, editing, effects, graphics, web and layout, all the creative disciplines are covered here.

★★★★

Vertus

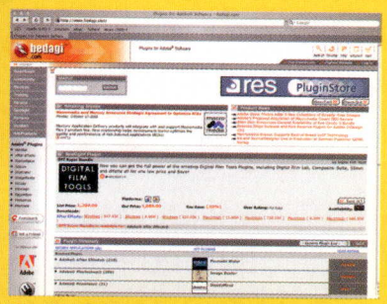
www.vertustech.com

This site specialises in the highly sought after Fluid Mask plug-in. The tool allows users to cut out complex lattices quickly, easily, and effectively. Currently the cost of the software has been dropped to £179. There is a troubleshooting picture page, and even the bonus of an online gallery for users to enter competitions.

★★★

Begadi

www.begadi.com



Begadi peddles plug-ins for all Adobe software, including After Effects, Illustrator, Photoshop and Premiere. The site rates the most popular plug-ins, currently Psunami (Photorealistic water effect) is topping the leader board. The site gives video examples of the plug-in's result.

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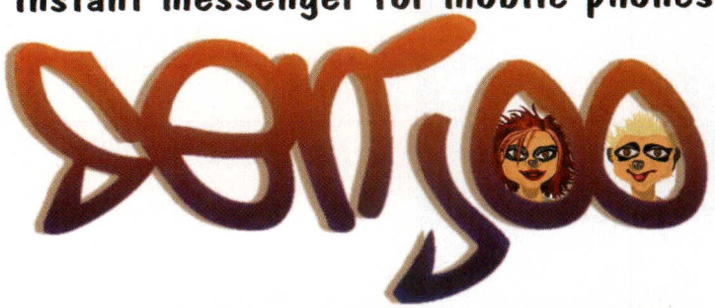

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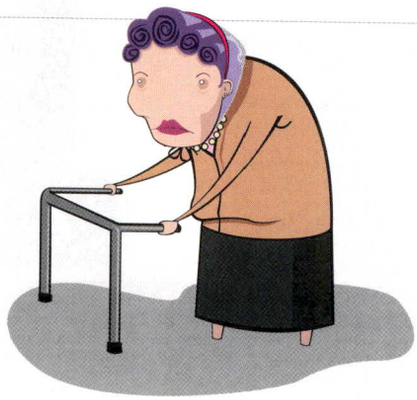

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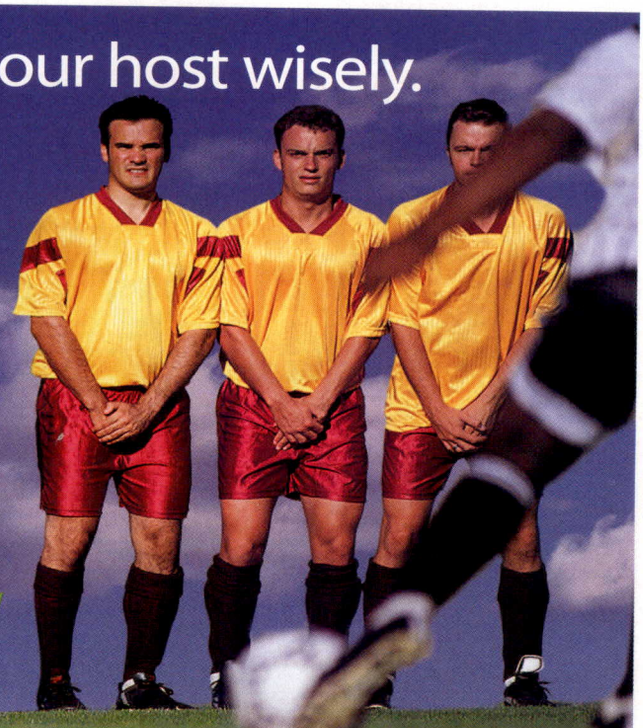

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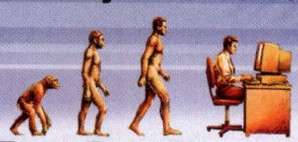

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on the free cd

Welcome to this issue's CD!

So you've just finished reading through the latest and greatest issue of *Digital Creative Arts* and are thinking, so what next? Before you resign this issue to the magazine rack, take some time out to explore this issue's free CD – the part of the magazine where the digital arts truly come to life.

Kicking off our selection of extras and freebies on the CD, which you'll find stuck to the inside cover, is a whole host of fantastic software giveaways. Top picks this issue include Serif's fantastic graphics program DrawPlus 5 and Xara's superb net building software, WebStyle 3.

We've also got fully featured demos of WebStyle 4 and Corel Painter IX lined up as well as a trial of Xara3D 6 and full version of Xara3D 3.

If you are looking for a little something extra, head over to the resources section. Here you'll find 30 royalty free stock photographs, custom shapes and plug-ins courtesy of graphicsxtras.com and for those still with a hunger in their bellies, there is more fantastic goodies for illustrator from our friends down at Hotdoor.com. Of course, as usual you'll find the key resource files for this issue's digital workshops in the projects section too – so what are you waiting for? Enjoy!

Lee Cornish
Multimedia Editor

Software selection

Top picks of free software and demos

Serif DrawPlus 5

www.serif.co.uk

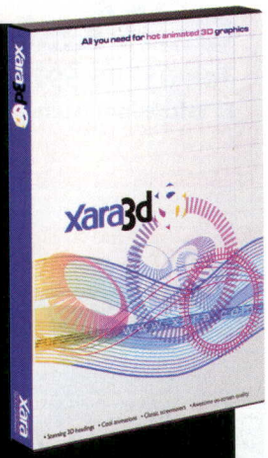
The ultimate drawing, graphics and animation package from the developers of the best selling PagePlus 7, Serif DrawPlus 5 combines the power and flexibility of vector graphics with photo realistic quality. The one stop solution for the busy designer, with DrawPlus 5 you can create fabulous original artwork and a whole lot more. Using this package means you can create superb graphics to enhance all of your vector and animation projects.

Full version of Xara3D 3 software and 3D 6 trial

www.xara.co.uk

Xara3D 3 is a 'slimware' Windows application designed specifically for creating high-quality, compact 3D text headings, either still or animated, for use on the Web.

Using Xara3D 3 you can create your own still or animated 3D heading using any TrueType font or imported metafile, use real-time 3D positioning simply by dragging the image on screen and even obtain the best possible on-screen quality using full real-time anti-aliasing. Both professional web designers and home users choose Xara3D to make still and animated 3D text and graphics, such as logos, titles, headings and buttons.

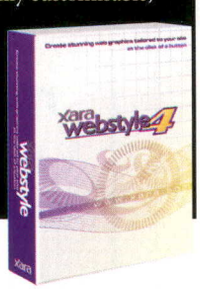


Webstyle 4 trial and Xara Webstyle 3 full software

www.xara.co.uk

Webstyle offers a quick and easy way to produce quality graphics and photos for the Web, no skill required! Create graphics by simply customising the professionally designed templates, including animated banner ads, button bars and DHTML menus, headings, web page backgrounds and even complete matching themed sets.

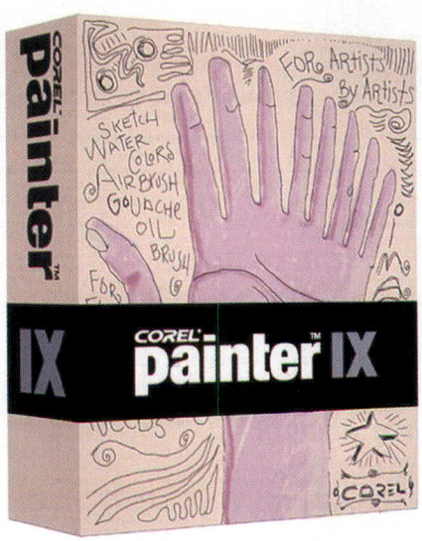
Webstyle works by taking professionally designed templates and simply edits them to suit your needs. All the templates are fully customisable, meaning you can change the text, colour, size and style in just a few clicks. Just choose a template, alter the content and settings, save your graphic and insert it into your web page.

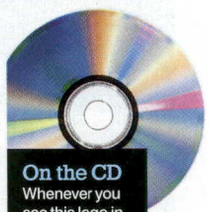


Painter IX (trial)

www.corel.co.uk

For more than 13 years, Painter has been the world's pre-eminent natural-media painting and illustration software, and this month we've got both Mac and PC versions for you to try out! Corel Painter IX offers the same breathtaking brushes and features that Painter artists have grown to love - but with significantly enhanced speed and performance. All brushes now operate at an average of twice their former speed, and some brushes are 10 times faster. Corel Painter IX is much more than a software application - it's a creative journey and, for many creative professionals a life-changing experience. With our tutorial on page 48 to guide you, isn't it time you had an art attack?





On the CD
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Your resources

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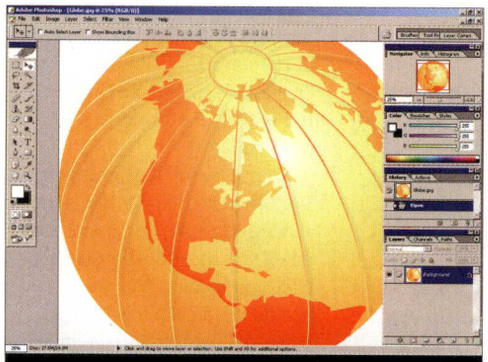
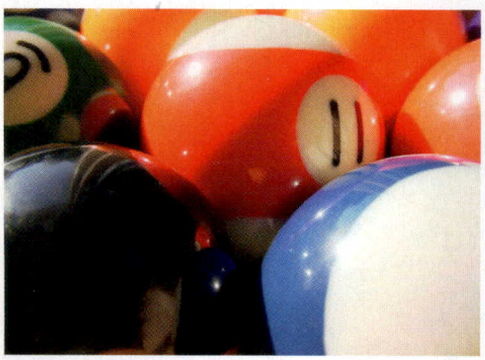


Graphicsxtras plug-ins

www.graphicxtras.com

We've got a selection of creative Photoshop plug-ins for you to try out from our friends down at Graphicsxtras.com. The company supplies plug-ins for Photoshop and Illustrator and also presets for Photoshop such as the 12,000 custom shapes collection, brush sets and patterns collections. The site also offers 22 volumes of plug-ins for Illustrator along with collections of graphic styles / brushes / swatches and more. Also available are symbols for Flash, Freehand, Fireworks, Expression and Paint Shop Pro.



Royalty free stock photography

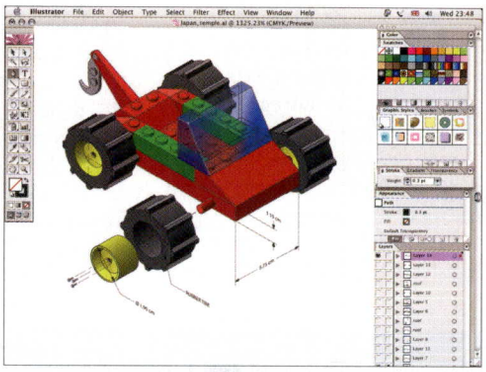
www.paragon.co.uk

Looking for inspiration or perhaps a starting point for an illustration? Then why not check out this collection of 30 royalty free images? Provided courtesy of your favourite creative magazine, Digital Creative Arts. This selection of high res imagery comes to you completely free and can be used in any of your creative projects. Featuring a wide range of subject matter, from landscapes to close-ups, black and white to colour, there's an image here to suit any taste or design and the photographs come in a range of sizes and styles.

Hot door plug-ins

www.hotdoor.com

Hot Door develops and distributes plug-ins for Adobe Illustrator and we've got a range of their latest and greatest products for you to try out. CADtools 4 is a new version of their most popular product for drawing, measuring and labelling objects within Illustrator, while CADpatterns complements these features with 134 vector-based swatches for design documents. MultiPage 2 also provides the unique ability to create multiple pages within Illustrator and export or print them with ease. Find these and more on this issue's free CD.

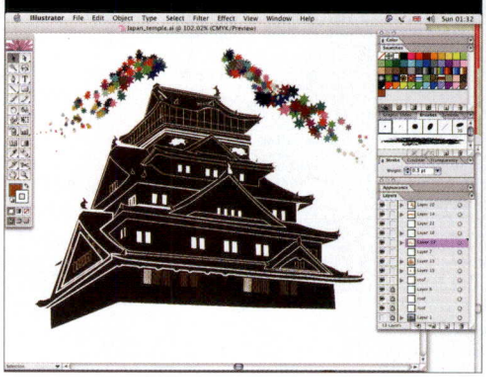


Symbols from Graphicsxtras

www.graphicextras.com

Enhance your creativity within Illustrator with these fantastic free symbols and styles.

On the disc you'll find yet more bounty from graphicsxtras.com, this time in the form of a set of custom shapes based on Graphicsextras.com Shapes Pack Vol. 9). These royalty-free shapes can be used in any project as required and are fantastic as a timesaving or inspirational device. Rip the disc out from behind the magazine's back cover to get started now!



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Xara Webstyle 4: Not only are we giving away a copy of Webstyle 3 this issue (value $79 plus VAT) but for a limited period, you can also upgrade to Xara Webstyle 4 (CD-version) for the offer price of just $49 plus VAT, providing you register your copy of Xara Webstyle 3 first. That's over 35% off the normal price of Webstyle 4!

On installation users will be asked to register the product in order to get a serial number. This process will entitle the user to the special price available on Webstyle 4 and free technical support for Webstyle 3.
The cover CD also includes a 15 day trial version of Webstyle 4 (fully functional but with a subset of the templates) and the brilliant Webstyle 4 movies.

To take advantage of this offer, follow the upgrade link within Webstyle 3 or go directly to the special offer page at http://offer.xara.com/ws3/upgrade/paragon/

Xara3D 6: As a special offer through Highbury titles, there is a full version of Xara3D 3 on this issue's free CD. Not only are we giving away a full copy of Xara3D 3 (value $44.99 plus VAT), but you can also then upgrade to the latest version for the upgrade price of approximately $34.99 plus VAT, a 25% discount on the normal price of a full copy of Xara3D 6, providing you register your copy of Xara3D 3 (by following the register link within the program or going to http://offer.xara.com/xara3d3/highbury/). The CD also includes a free 15 day trial version and demo movie of Xara3D 6.

This special offer on the upgrade lasts 60 days. Upgrade via the Web only by following the upgrade link on Xara3D 3 or by going directly to the special offer page at http://offer.xara.com/xara3d3/upgrade/highbury/

A striking style, awe-inspiring portfolio and jaw-dropping client base, RAY SMITH is currently riding high in the design world. It's little wonder then that he proved the obvious choice for designing the front cover of this edition of *Digital Creative Arts*

Back to front

Aside from *DCA*, Ray has dozens of stellar clients including Channel 4, *The Financial Times*, *Spin* Magazine, *GQ*, Levis and Virgin, and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

This wide and product ranging register of employers is a credit to his skills and ability to implement a versatile yet trend setting style. "It's been a rather busy few years for me. I have recently completed advertising projects for Absolut Vodka, Camel, Nike and The Eden project and I've been making editorial work for *The Guardian*, *Rolling Stone*, *De Spiegel* and the *Milwaukee Times*, among others."

Armed with a knowledge of Photoshop and gifted with a talent in art, Ray transformed our initial design brief into a tangible success story.

In the short space of three weeks Ray designed this stunning cover and artwork for our Hitting the big time" feature. The article details the passages and pitfalls into the cutthroat creative industries covering illustration, web design and animation. "Our hero is your average young and eager creative starting out in the business keen to make his own particular mark," Ray explains. "I created the images for this project in Photoshop on a rather powerful PC."

Summarising Ray Smith's style is ultimately tricky, as like many successful artists he can creatively adapt and metamorphosize his style according to the brief, product and customer's brand. However, underlying trademarks include the use of retro imagery, cale, and an amalgamation of relevant objects.

The final product is this colourful montage energetically encompassing all of the artistic disciplines in a visual feast of contrast and zest, but Ray remains as humble as ever, "I think it turned out nicely." To see more of Ray Smith's work visit his website at **www.raysmith.bz** ■

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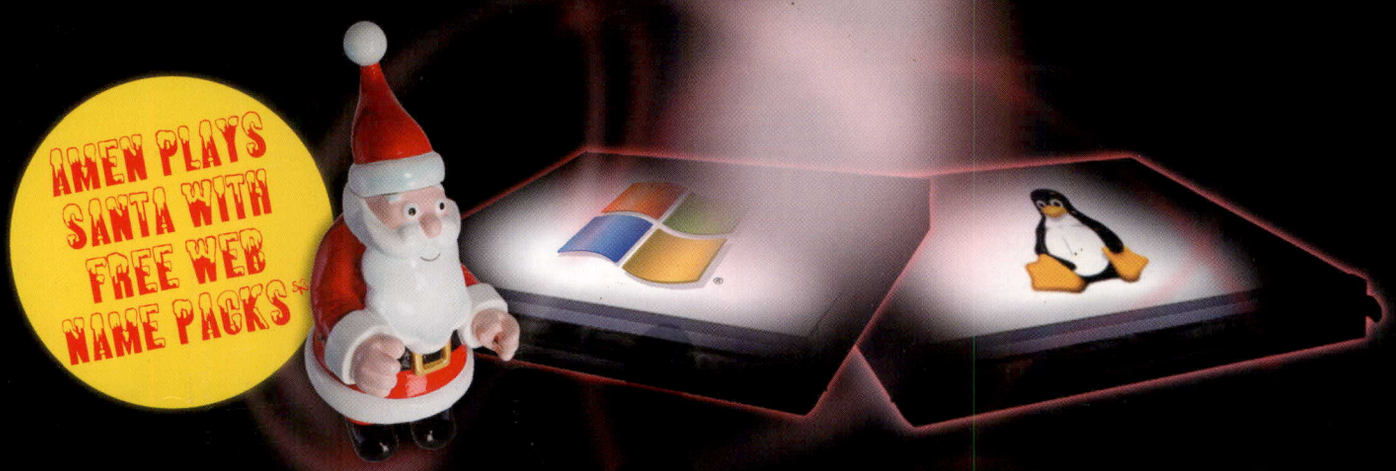

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